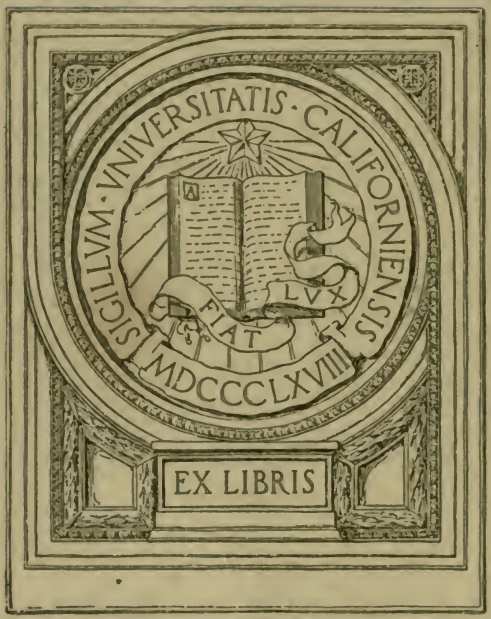
WALKING SHADOWS

ALFRED NOYES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WALKING SHADOWS

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BY

ALFRED NOYES

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UNCLE HYACINTH

WALKING SHADOWS

I

UNCLE HYACINTH

1

On a bright morning, early in the year 1917, Herr Sigismund Krauss, Secret Agent of the German Government, stopped at the entrance of Harrods' Stores, looked at himself in one of the big mirrors, thought that he really did look a little like von Hindenburg, and adjusted his tie. To relieve the tension, let it be added that this scene was not enacted in London, but in the big branch of Harrods' that had recently been opened in Buenos Ayres.

Nevertheless, it was because it looked so very much like the London branch that it had rasped the nerves of Herr Krauss. He was in a very nervous condition owing to the state of his digestive system, and he was easily irritated. He had been annoyed, in the first place, because the German houses in Buenos Ayres were un-

able to sell him several things which he thought necessary for the voyage he was about to take across the Atlantic. He had been almost angry when the bald-headed Englishman who waited on him in Harrods' advised him to buy a safety waistcoat. All that he needed for his safety was the fraudulent Swedish passport, made out in the name of Erik Neilsen, which he carried in his breast-pocket.

"I am an American citizen," he said. "I am sailing to Barcelona on an Argentine ship, vich the Germans are pledged nod to sink."

"This is the exact model of the waistcoat that saved the life of Lord Winchelsea," said the Englishman. "I advise you to procure one. You never know what those damned Germans will do."

Here was a chance of raising a little feeling against the United States, and Herr Krauss never lost an opportunity. He pretended to be even more angry than he really was.

"That is a most ungalled for suggestion to a citizen of a neutral guntry," he snorted. "I shall report id to the authorities."

These mixed emotions had disarranged his tie. But he had obtained all that he wanted; and when he emerged into the street the magic of the blue sky and the brilliance of the sunlight

on the stream of motor-cars and gay dresses cheered him greatly. After all, it was not at all like London; and there were still places where a good German might speak his mind, if he did not insist too much on his allegiance.

He was in a great hurry, for his ship—the *Hispaniola*—sailed that afternoon. When he reached his hotel he had only just time enough to pack his hand-luggage and drive down to the docks. His trunk had gone in advance. It was very important indeed that he should not miss the boat. There was trouble pending, which might lead to his arrest if he remained in Argentina for another week; and there was urgent (and profitable) work for him to do in Europe.

In his cab, on the way to the docks, he examined the three letters which had been waiting for him at the hotel. Two of them were requests for a settlement of certain bills. "They can wait," he murmured to himself euphemistically, "till after the war."

The third letter ran thus:

"*Dear Erik,—Bon voyage! Most amusing news. Operation successful. Uncle Hyacinth's appetite splendid. Six meals daily.—Yours affectionately,*

"BOLO."

This was the most annoying thing of all. Herr Krauss knew nothing about any operation. He knew even less about Uncle Hyacinth, and, in order to interpret the message, he would require the code (Number Six, as indicated by the last word but two), and the code was locked up in his big brass-bound steamer-trunk. It was not likely to be anything that required immediate attention. He had received a number of code messages lately which did not even call for a reply. It was merely irritating.

When he reached the docks he found that his trunk was buried under a mountain of other baggage on the lower deck of the *Hispaniola*, and that he would not be able to get it before they sailed. He had just ten minutes to dash ashore and ring up the German Legation on the telephone. He wasted nearly all of them in getting the right change to slip into the machine. A most exasperating conversation followed.

"I wish to speak to the German Minister."

"He is away for the week-end. This is his secretary."

"This is Sigismund Krauss speaking."

"Oh, yes."

"I have received a message about Uncle Hyacinth."

"I can't hear."

"Uncle Hyacinth's appetite!" This was bellowed furiously.

"Oh, yes." The voice was very cautious and polite.

"I want to know if it's important."

"Whose appetite did you say?"

"Uncle Hyacinth's." This was like Hindenburg himself thundering.

There seemed to be some sort of a consultation at the other end of the wire. Then the reply came very clearly:

"I'm sorry, but we cannot talk over the telephone. I can't hear anything you say. Please put your question in writing."

It was an obvious lie for anyone to say he could not hear the tremendous voice in which Herr Krauss had made his touching inquiry; but he fully understood the need for caution. He had tapped too many wires himself to blame his colleagues for timidity. He had only a minute to burst out of the telephone booth and regain the deck before the gang-planks were hoisted in and the ship began to slide away to the open sea. He was more than annoyed, he was disgusted, to find that half the people on board were talking English. Two or three of them, including the captain, were actually British subjects, while the purser, a few of the

stewards and several passengers were citizens of the United States.

It was late that evening, and the shore lights had all died away over the pitch-black water when the brass-bound trunk belonging to Mr. Neilsen, as we must call him henceforward, was carried into his stateroom by two grunting stewards. The mysterious letter could be of no use to the Fatherland now, and he certainly did not expect it to be important from a selfish point of view. Also, he was hungry, and he did not hurry over his dinner in order to decode it. It was only his curiosity that impelled him to do so before he turned in; but a kind of petrifaction overspread his well-fed countenance as the significance of the message dawned upon him. He sat on a suit-case, in his somewhat cramped quarters, and translated it methodically, looking up the meaning of each word in the code, like a very unpleasant schoolboy with a dictionary. He was nothing if not efficient, and he wrote it all down in pencil on a sheet of note-paper, in two parallel columns, thus:

Bon voyage	=	U-boats
Most	=	Instructed
Amusing	=	Sink
News	=	Argentine

Operation	=	Ships
Successful	=	Destruction
Uncle Hyacinth's	=	Hispaniola
Appetite	=	Essential
Splendid	=	Cancel
Six	=	Code number
Meals	=	Passage
Daily	=	Immediately

Perhaps to make sure that his eyes did not deceive him, Mr. Neilsen wrote the translation out again, mechanically, in its proper form at the foot of the page, thus:

"*U-boats instructed sink Argentine ships. Destruction Hispaniola essential. Cancel passage immediately.*"

It seemed to have exactly the same meaning. It was ghastly. He knew exactly what that word "destruction" meant, as applied to the *Hispaniola*. He had been present at a secret meeting only a month ago, at which it was definitely decided that it would be inadvisable to carry out a certain amiable plan of sinking the Argentine ships without leaving any traces, while an appearance of friendship was maintained with the Argentine Government. Evidently this policy had suddenly been reversed. There would be a concentration of half a dozen

U-boats, a swarm of them probably, for the express purpose of sinking the *Hispaniola*, just as they had concentrated on the *Lusitania;* but, in this case, there would be no survivors at all. The ship's boats would be destroyed by gun-fire, with all their occupants, because it was necessary that there should be no evidence of what had happened, and necessity knows no law. There was no chance of their failing. They would not dare to fail; and he himself had organised the system by which the most precise information with regard to sailings was conveyed to the German Admiralty.

He crushed all the papers into his breast-pocket and hurried up on deck. It was horribly dark. At the smoking-room door he met one of the ship's officers.

"Tell me," said Mr. Neilsen, "is there any possibility of our . . . of our meeting a ship —er—bound the other way?"

The officer stared at him, wondering whether Mr. Neilsen was drunk or seasick.

"Certainly," he said, "but it's not likely for some days on this course."

"Will it be possible for me to be taken off and return? I have found amongst my mail an imbortant letter. A friend is very ill."

"I'm afraid it's quite impossible. In the

first place, we are not likely to meet anything but cattle-ships till we are in European waters."

"Oh, but in this case, even a cattle-ship . . ." said Mr. Neilsen with great feeling.

"It is impossible, I am afraid, in any case. It is absolutely against the rules; and in war time, of course, they are more strict than ever."

"Even if I were to pay?"

"Time is not for sale in this war, I am afraid; it's verboten," said the officer with a smile, and that, of course, Mr. Neilsen understood at once.

He was naturally an excitable man; and his inability to obtain his wish made him feel that he would give all his worldly possessions at this moment for a berth in the dirtiest cattle-boat that ever tramped the seas, if only it were going in the opposite direction.

He returned to his stateroom, almost panic-stricken. He sat down on a suit-case and held his head between his hands, while he tried to think. He was a slippery creature, and his fellow-countrymen had often admired his "slimness" in former crises; but it was difficult to discover a cranny big enough for a cockroach here, unless he made a clean breast of it to the captain. In that case he would be incriminated with all the belligerents and most of

the neutrals. There would be nowhere in the world where he could hide his head, except, perhaps, Mexico. He would probably be penniless as well.

At this point in his cogitations there was a knock on the door which startled him like a pistol shot. He opened it, a cautious inch or two (for his papers were all over his berth), and a steward handed him a telegram.

"This was waiting for you at the purser's office, sir," he said "The mail has only just been sorted. If you wish to reply by wireless, you can do so up to midnight." The man was smiling, as if he knew the contents. There had been some jesting, in fact, about this telegram at the office.

A gleam of hope shot through Mr. Neilsen's chaotic brain as he opened the envelope with trembling fingers. Perhaps it contained reassuring news. His face fell. It simply repeated the former sickening message about Uncle Hyacinth. But the steward had reminded him of one last resource.

"Yes," he said, trying hard to be calm, "I shall want to send a reply."

"Here is a form, sir. You'll find the regulations printed on the back."

Mr. Neilsen closed the door and sank gasp-

ing on the suit-case to examine the form. The regulations stated that no message would be accepted in code. This did not worry him at first, as he thought he could concoct an apparently straightforward and harmless message with the elaborate vocabulary of his Number Six. But the code had not been intended for agonising moments like these. It abounded in commercial phrases, medical terms, and domestic greetings; and though there were a number of alternative words and synonyms, it was not so easy as he had expected to make a coherent message, which should be apparently a reply to the telegram he had received. After half an hour of seeking for the *mot juste* which would have melted the heart of a Flaubert, he arrived at the purser's office with wild eyes and handed in the yellow form.

"I wish to send this by Marconi wireless," he said.

The purser tapped each word with his pencil as he read it over:

"*Splendid—most—amusing—use—heaps—butter—congratulate—Uncle Hyacinth—love—Erik.*"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the purser, "but we can only accept messages *en clair.*"

"It is as clear as I can make it," said Mr. Neilsen, and he was telling the truth. "It is the answer to the telegram which was handed to me on board."

"It looks a little unusual, sir."

"It is gonnected with an unusual operation," said Mr. Neilsen, who was getting thoroughly rattled, "and goncerns the diet of the batient."

"I see," said the purser. "Well, I'll take your word for it, sir, and tell the operator."

At this moment the steward, who had entered Mr. Neilsen's stateroom during his absence, was laying out that gentleman's pyjamas on his berth. He shook them out, in order to fold them properly, and in doing so he shook out a round ball of paper on to the floor. He unrolled it and discovered two parallel columns of words, which gave a new meaning to the telegram. He put it in his pocket, looked carefully round the room, took all the torn scraps out of the waste-paper basket, and put those also in his pocket. Then he went out, just in time to avoid meeting Mr. Neilsen, and trotted by another companion-way to the purser's office. Ten minutes later a consultation was held in the captain's cabin. The two messages and the scraps of paper were spread

out on the table, while the purser took another large clean sheet, on which he jotted down as many of the words as could be deciphered, together with their equivalents, in two parallel columns, almost as neat as those of Mr. Neilsen himself. When he had finished there was a very nice little vocabulary (though it was only a small part of the code), and in a very short time they were staring in amazement at the full translation of the messages concerning Uncle Hyacinth. Then they proceeded to business.

Captain Abbey was an Englishman who had commanded many ships in many parts of the world. He had worked his way up from before the mast, and in moments of emotion he was still inclined to be reckless with his aitches. He was very large and red-faced, and looked as the elder Weller might have looked if he had taken to the sea in youth. Captain Abbey was not a vindictive man, but the *Hispaniola* was the finest ship he had yet commanded, and the opportunity had come to him as a result of the war and the dearth of neutral skippers who were willing to take risks. He was not anxious to lose the ship on his first voyage, and his face grew redder and redder as he stared at the messages on the table.

"And the lily-livered little skunk wanted

to get orf and save his own 'ide! But 'e was quite ready to let the rest of us gow to 'ell! There are twenty women and four children aboard, too, and we're guaranteed by the German Government! It would serve 'im right if we made 'im walk the plank, like they used to do. But drowning's too good for 'im. If we put 'im in irons 'e'll know we're on the watch, and that'll ease 'is mind too much. I know what to do with 'im when we get 'im on the other side. But in the meantime we'll give that little bit of *sauerkraut* a taste of his own medicine. 'Ere's the idea! We've got enough of the code to work it. We'll give 'im another radiogram to take with him to bed to-night. 'Ow's this? Steward, get me one of them yellow telegraph forms and one of the proper envelopes. We'll fix it all up in good shape. And look 'ere, steward, not a word about this to anyone, you understand?"

The steward departed on his errand. Captain Abbey took another sheet of paper and laboriously, with tongue out-thrust, constructed a sentence, consulting the purser's two columns from time to time and occasionally chuckling as he altered or added a word.

"What's the translation of *onions*?" he said.

"I think it means *abroad*, according to this column," said the purser.

"Put it down. Now, what does *tonsils* mean?"

"*Tonsils? Tonsils?* Oh, yes, here we are. It means *von Tirpitz*."

"The devil it does," said Captain Abbey. "And what does *meat* mean?"

"*German*, I think."

"And *colossal?*"

"I had it here a moment ago. Ah, *colossal* means *twenty*."

"Just like 'em," said the Captain. "Here's *appendix!* I suppose they find these medical terms useful. How do you translate that?"

"*Appendix?* H'mm, let me see. *Appendix* means *treacherous*."

"'E deserves to 'ave it cut out with a blunt saw, blast 'is eyes. And what d' you make of this message 'e's just 'anded in?"

"As far as I can make it out, this is the translation:

"*Cancel instructions sink. Message too late. Aboard Hispaniola.*"

The purser slapped his thigh with delight as he followed the work over the captain's shoulder; and, when the form arrived, he wrote out

the captain's composition in a very large clear hand, with the fervour of a man announcing good news. Then he licked the flap of the yellow envelope, closed it, addressed it, and handed it to the steward.

"Give this wireless message to Mr. Neilsen in half an hour. Tell him it has just arrived. If there is any reply to-night, he must send it before twelve o'clock."

"I 'ope that will make 'im sit up and think," said Captain Abbey. "I'll consider what steps I'd better take to save the ship, and then I shall probably 'ave a wireless or two of my own to send elsewhere."

Mr. Neilsen was greatly excited when the steward knocked on his door and handed him the second wireless message. He opened it with trembling fingers and read:

"*Still more successful. Uncle Hyacinth's tonsils removed. Appetite now colossal. Bless him. Taking large quantities frozen meat. Best greetings.*"

He could hardly wait to translate it. He sat down on his suit-case again and spelled it out with the help of his Number Six, word by word, refusing to believe his eyes, refusing even to read it as a consecutive sentence till the

bottom of the two parallel columns had been reached, thus:

Still	=	Impossible
More	=	Total
Successful	=	Destruction
Uncle Hyacinth's	=	Hispaniola
Tonsils	=	Von Tirpitz
Removed	=	Advises
Appetite	=	Essential
Now	=	Squadron
Colossal	=	Twenty
Bless him	=	Submarines
Taking	=	Waiting
Large	=	Appropriate
Quantities	=	Death
Frozen	=	Good
Meat	=	German
Best	=	Enviable
Greetings	=	Position

This was hideous. He remembered all that he had done all over the world in the interests of the Fatherland. He remembered the skilful way in which, long before the war, he had stirred up feeling in America against Japan, and in Japan against both America and England. He remembered the way in which he had manipu-

lated the peace societies in the interests of militarism. He had spent several years in London before the war, and he believed he had helped to make the very name of England a reproach in literary coteries; so that current English literature, unless it went far beyond honest criticism of English life, unless indeed it manifested a complete contempt for that pharisaical country, and painted it as rotten from head to foot, lost caste among the self-enthroned British "intellectuals." It was very easy to do this, because, while English editors paid considerable attention to their leading articles, they did not care very much what kind of stuff was printed in their literary columns, and they would allow the best of our literature, old and new, to be damned by an anonymous Sinn Feiner in half a dozen journals simultaneously. The editors were patriotic enough, but they didn't think current literature of much importance. He had been able, therefore, to quote extracts from important London journals in the foreign press. He had been helped, too, by lecturers who drew pensions for their literary merits from the British Government, and told American audiences that the one flag they loathed was the flag of the land that pensioned them. He had reprinted these utterances, together with the innocent bleatings of

the "intellectuals," and scattered them all over the world in pamphlet form. He had marked passages in their books, and sent them to friends. Thousands of columns were devoted to them in the newspapers of foreign countries, while the English Press occasionally referred to them in brief paragraphs, announcing to a drugged public at home that the vagaries of these writers were of no importance. He had, in short, carried out the programme of his country to the letter, and poisoned the intellectual well-springs of her chief rival. He had even written letters to the newspapers in Scotland, which had stimulated the belief of certain zealous Scots that whenever the name of England was used it was intended as a deliberate onslaught upon the Union. There was hardly any destructive force, or thought, or feeling, good, bad, or merely trivial, which he had not turned to the advantage of Germany and the disadvantage of other nations. Then, when the war broke out, he had redoubled his activities. He was amazed when he thought of the successful lies he had fostered all over the world. He had plotted with Hindoos on the coast of California, and provided them with the literature of freedom, in the interests of autocracy. He worked for dissension abroad and union in Germany. He was

hand-in-glove with the I.W.W. He was idealist, socialist, pacifist, anarchist, futurist, suffragist, nationalist, internationalist, and always publicist, all at once, and for one cause only—the cause of Germany. And this was the gratitude of the—of the—swine. Well, he would teach them a lesson. God in heaven! There was only one thing he could do to save his skin. He would send them an ultimatum. It was their last chance. He shivered to think that it might be his own.

But it was not so easy as he thought it would be to burn all his boats. It cost him two days and two nights of tortuous thinking before he could bring himself to the point. At eleven o'clock on the third night the purser brought the captain a new message which Mr. Neilsen had just handed in to be dispatched by wireless. It ran as follows:

"*Continue treatment. Vastly amusing. Uncle Hyacinth's magnificent constitution stand anything. Apply mustard. Try red pepper.*"

The group that met to consider this new development included three passengers whom the captain had invited to share what he called "the fun." There was a Miss Depew, an American girl, who was going to Europe to do

Red Cross work, and a Mr. and Mrs. Pennyfeather, English residents of Buenos Ayres, with whom she was travelling. The message, as they interpreted it, ran as follows :

"*Unless instructions to sink Hispaniola countermanded, shall inform Captain. No alternative. Most important papers my possession.*"

"Good," said Captain Abbey, "'e's beginning to show symptoms of blackmail. I'd send this message on, only we're likely to make a bigger bag by keeping quiet. We'll let him 'ave the reply to-morrow morning. What shall we do to 'im next?"

"Shoot him," said Miss Depew, with complete calm.

"Oh, I want to 'ave a little fun with 'im first," said Captain Abbey. "I'm afraid you 'aven't got much sense of humour, Miss Depew."

"Do you think so?" she said. She was of the purest Gibson type, and never flickered an innocent eyelash or twitched a corner of her red Cupid's bow of a mouth as she drawled: "I think it would be very humorous indeed to shoot him, now that we know he is a German."

"Well, after 'is trying to leave us without warning, 'e deserves to be skinned and stuffed.

But we are likely to make much more of it if we keep 'im alive for our entertainment. Besides, 'e's going to be useful on the other side. Now, what do you think of this for a scheme?"

The heads of the conspirators drew closer round the table; and Mr. Neilsen, wandering on deck like a lost spirit, pondered on the tragic ironies of life. The thoughtless laughter that rippled up to him from the captain's cabin filled him with no compassion towards anyone but himself. It was merely one more proof that only the Germans took life seriously. All the same, if he could possibly help it, he was not going to let them take his own life.

2

THERE was no radiogram for Mr. Neilsen on the following day; and he was perplexed by a new problem as he walked feverishly up and down the promenade deck.

Even if he received an assurance that the *Hispaniola* would be spared, how could he know that he was being told the truth? Necessity, as he knew quite well, was the mother of murder. It was very necessary indeed that his mouth should be sealed. Besides, he had more than a suspicion that his use was fulfilled in the eyes of the German Government, and that they would not be sorry if they could conveniently get rid of him. He possessed a lot of perilous knowledge; and he wished heartily that he didn't. He was tasting, in fact, the inevitable hell of the criminal, which is not that other people distrust him, but that he can trust nobody else.

He leaned over the side of the ship, and watched the white foam veining the black water.

"Curious, isn't it?" said dapper little Mr. Pennyfeather, who stood near him. "Exactly

like liquid marble. Makes you think of that philosophic Johnny, What's-his-name, fellow that said 'everything flows,' don't you know? And it does, too, by Jove! Everything! Including one's income! It's curious, Mr. Neilsen, how quickly we've changed all our ideas about the value of human life, isn't it? By Jove, that's flowing, too! The other morning I caught myself saying that there was no news in the paper; and then I realised that I'd overlooked the sudden death of about ten thousand men on the western front. Well, we've all got to die some day, and perhaps it's best to do it before we deteriorate too far. Don't you think so?"

Mr. Neilsen grunted morosely. He hated to be pestered by these gadflies of the steamer. He particularly disliked this little Englishman with the neat grey beard, not only because he was the head of an obnoxious bank in Buenos Ayres, but because he would persist in talking, with a ghoulish geniality, about submarine operations and the subject of death. Also, he was one of those hopeless people who had been led, by the wholesale slaughter of the war, to thoughts of the possibility of a future life. Apparently, Mr. Pennyfeather had no philosophy, and his spiritual being was groping for

light through these materialistic fogs which brood over the borderlands of science. His wife was even more irritating; for she, too, was groping, chiefly because it was the fashion; and they both insisted on talking to Mr. Neilsen about it. They had quite spoiled his breakfast this morning. He did not resent it on spiritual grounds, for he had none, but he did resent it because it reminded him of his mortality, and also because a professional quack does not like to be bothered by amateurs.

Mrs. Pennyfeather approached him now on the other side. She was a faded lady, with her hair dyed yellow, and tortoise-shell spectacles.

"Have you ever had your halo read, Mr. Neilsen?" she asked, with a sickly smile.

"No, I don'd believe in it," he said gruffly.

"But, surely you believe in the spectrum," she continued, with a ghastly inconsequence that almost curdled the logic in his German brain.

"Certainly," he replied, trying hard to be polite.

"And therefore in spectres," she cooed ingratiatingly, as if she were talking to a very small child.

"Nod at all! Nod at all!" he exploded

somewhat violently, while Mr. Pennyfeather, on the other side, came to his rescue, sagely repudiating the methods of his wife.

"No! No! my dear. I don't think your train of thought is quite correct there. My wife and I are very much interested in recent occult experiments, Mr. Neilsen. We've been wondering whether you wouldn't join us one night round the ouija-board."

"Id is all nonsense to me," said Mr. Neilsen, gesticulating with both arms.

"Quite so. Very natural. But we got some very curious results last night," continued Mr. Pennyfeather. "Most extraordinary. The purser was with us, and he thought it would interest you. I wish you would join us."

"I should regard id as gomplete waste of time," said Mr. Neilsen.

"Surely, nothing can be waste of time that increases our knowledge of the bourne from which no traveller returns," replied the lyric lips of Mrs. Pennyfeather.

"To me, the methods are ridiculous," said Mr. Neilsen. "All this furniture removal. Ach!"

"Ah," said Mr. Pennyfeather, "you should read What's-his-name. You know the chap, Susan. Fellow that said it's like a shipwrecked

man waving a shirt on a stick to attract attention. Of course, it's ridiculous! But what else can you do, if you haven't any other way of signalling? Why, man alive! you'd use your trousers, wouldn't you, if you hadn't anything else? And the alternative—drowning, remember—drowning beneath what thingumebob calls 'the unplumbed, salt, estranging sea.'"

"Eggscuse me," said Mr. Neilsen, "I have some important business with the captain. I must go."

Mr. Neilsen had been trying hard to make up his mind, despite these irrelevant interruptions. He had received no assurance by wireless, and he had convinced himself that even if he did receive one, it would be wiser to inform the captain. But there were many difficulties in the way. He had taken great care never to do anything that might lead to the death penalty, that is to say, among nations less civilised than his own. But there was that affair of the code. It might make things very unpleasant. A dozen other suspicious circumstances would have to be explained away. A dozen times he had hesitated as he did this morning. He met the captain at the foot of the bridge.

"Ah, Mr. Neilsen," said the latter with great cordiality, "you're the very man I want

to see. We're 'aving a concert to-night in the first-class dining-room on behalf of the wives and children of the British mine-sweepers and the auxiliary patrols. You see, although this is a neutral ship, we depend upon them, more or less, for our safety. I thought it would be pleasant if you—as a neutral—would say just a few words. I understand that they've rescued a good many Swedish crews from torpedoed ships; and, whatever view we may take of the war, we 'ave to admit that these little boats are doing the work of civilisation."

Mr. Neilsen thought he saw an opportunity of ingratiating himself, and he seized it. He could broach the other matter later on.

"I vill do my best, Captain."

"'Ere is a London newspaper that will tell you all about their work."

Mr. Neilsen retired to his stateroom and studied the newspaper fervently.

The captain took the chair that evening, and he did it very well. He introduced Mr. Neilsen in a few appropriate words; and Mr. Neilsen spoke for nearly five minutes in English, with an impassioned eloquence and a rapidly deteriorating accent.

"Dese liddle batrol boads," he said in his peroration, "how touching to the heart is der

vork! Some of us forget ven ve are safe on land how much ve owe to them. But no matter vot your nationality, ven you are on the high seas, surrounded with darkness and dangers, not knowing ven you shall be torpedoed, vot a grade affection you feel then to dese liddle batrol boads! As a citizen of Sweden, I speak vot I *know*. The ships of my guntry have suffered much in dis war. The sailors of my guntry have been thrown into the water by tousands through der submarines. But dese liddle batrol boads, they save them from drowning. They give them blankets and hot goffee. They restore them to their veeping mothers."

Mr. Neilsen closed amidst tumultuous applause and, when the collection was taken up by Miss Depew, his contribution was the largest of the evening.

The rest of the entertainment consisted chiefly of music and recitation. Mr. Pennyfeather contributed a song which he had composed himself. Typewritten copies of the words were issued to the audience; and a very fat and solemn Spaniard accompanied him with thunderous chords on the piano. Everyone joined in the chorus; but Mr. Neilsen did not like the song at all. It was concerned with Mr. Pennyfeather's usual gruesome subject; and he rolled

it out, in a surprisingly rich baritone, with the gusto of a schoolboy :

If they sink us, we shall be
All the nearer to the sea !
That's no hardship to deplore,
We've all been in the sea before.

CHORUS : *And then we'll go a-rambling,*
A-rambling, a-rambling,
With all the little lobsters,
From Frisco to the Nore.

If we swim, it's one more tale,
Round the hearth and over the ale ;
When your lass is on your knee,
And love comes laughing from the sea.

CHORUS : *And then we'll go a-rambling,*
A-rambling, a-rambling,
A-rambling through the roses
That ramble round the door.

If we drown, our bones and blood
Mingle with the eternal flood.
That's no hardship to deplore !
We've all been in the sea before.

CHORUS : *And then we'll go a-rambling*
A-rambling, a-rambling,
The road that Jonah rambled
And twenty thousand more.

"Now," said Mr. Pennyfeather, holding out his hands like the conductor of a revival meeting, "all the ladies, very softly, please."

The solemn Spaniard rolled his great black eyes at the audience, and repeated the refrain *pianissimo*, while the silvery voices carolled:

With all the little lobsters,
From Frisco to the Nore.

"Now, all the gentlemen, please," said Mr. Pennyfeather. The Spaniard's eyes flashed. He rolled thunder from the piano, and Mr. Neilsen found himself bellowing with the rest of the audience:

The road that Jonah rambled
From Hull to Singapore.
And twenty thousand, thirty thousand,
Forty thousand, fifty thousand,
Sixty thousand, seventy thousand,
Eighty thousand more!

It was an elaborate conclusion, accompanied by elephantine stampings of Captain Abbey's feet; but Mr. Neilsen retired to his room in a state of great depression. The frivolity of these people in the face of his countrymen appalled him.

On the next morning he decided to act, and sent a message to the captain asking for an interview. The captain responded at once and received him with great cordiality. But the innocence of his countenance almost paralysed

Mr. Neilsen's intellect at the outset, and it was very difficult to approach the subject.

"Do you see this, Mr. Neilsen?" said the captain, holding up a large champagne bottle. "Do you know what I've got in this?"

"Champagne," said Mr. Neilsen, with the weary pathos of a logician among idiots.

"No, sir; guess again."

"Pilsener!"

"No, sir! It's plain sea-water. I've just filled it. I'm taking it 'ome to my wife. She takes it for the good of 'er stummick, a small wine-glass at a time. She always likes me to fill it for her in mid-Atlantic. She's come to depend on it now, and I wouldn't dare to go 'ome without it. I forgot to fill it once till we were off the coast of Spain. And, would you believe it, Mr. Neilsen, that woman knew. The moment she tasted it she knew it wasn't the right vintage. Well, sir, we shall soon be in the war-zone now. But you are not looking very well, Mr. Neilsen. I 'ope you've got a comfortable room."

"I have reason to believe, Captain, that there will be an attempt made by the submarines to sink the *Hispaniola*," said Mr. Neilsen abruptly.

"Nonsense, my dear sir! This is a neutral

ship, and we're sailing to a neutral country, under explicit guarantees from the German Government. They won't sink the *Hispaniola* for the pleasure of killing her superannuated English captain."

"I have reason to believe that they intended to—er—change their bolicy. I was not sure of id till I opened my mail on the boad; but—er—I have a friend in Buenos Ayres who vas in glose touch—er—business gonnections—with members of the German Legation; he—er—advised me too late, I had better gancel my bassage. I fear there is no doubt they vill change their bolicy."

"But they couldn't. There ain't any policy. The Argentine Republic is a neutral country. You can't make me believe they'd do a thing like that. It wouldn't be honest, Mr. Neilsen. Of course, it's war time; but the German Government wants to be honourable, don't it, like any other government?"

"I don'd understand the reasons; but I fear there is no doubt aboud the facts," said Mr. Neilsen.

"Have you got the letter?"

"No, I thought as you do ad first, and I tore id up."

"Was that why you wanted to get orf

and go back?" the captain inquired mercilessly.

"I gonfess I vas a liddle alarmed; but I thought perhaps I vas unduly alarmed at the time. I goodn't trust my own judgment, and I had no ride to make other bassengers nervous."

"That was very thoughtful of you. I trust you will continue to keep this matter to yourself, for I assure you—though I consider the German Government 'opelessly wrong in this war—they wouldn't do a dirty thing like that. They're very anxious to be on good terms with the South American Republics; and they'd ruin themselves for ever."

"But my information is they vill sink the ships vithoud leaving any draces."

"What do you mean? Pretend to be friendly, and then . . . Come, now, that's an awful suggestion to make . . ."

At these words, Mr. Neilsen had a vivid mental picture of his conversation with the bald-headed Englishman in Harrods'.

"Do you mean," the captain continued, waxing eloquent, "do you mean they'd sink the ships and massacre every blessed soul aboard regardless of their nationality? Of course, I'm an Englishman, and I don't love 'em, but that ain't even murder. That's plain beastliness.

It couldn't be done by anything that walks on two legs. I tell you what, Mr. Neilsen, you're a bit overwrought and nervous. You want a little recreation. You'd better join the party to-night in my cabin. Mr. and Mrs. Pennyfeather are coming, and a very nice American girl—Miss Depew. We're going to get a wireless message or two from the next world. Ever played with the ouija-board? Nor had I till this voyage; but I must say it's interesting. You ought to see it, as a scientific man. I understand you're interested in science, and you know there's no end of scientists, big men, too, taking this thing up. You'd better come. Half-past eight. Right you are."

And so Mr. Neilsen was ushered out into despair for the rest of the day, and booked for an unpleasant evening. He had accepted the captain's invitation as a matter of policy; for he thought he might be able to talk further with him, and it was not always easy to secure an opportunity. In fact, when he thought things over, he was inclined to feel more amiably towards the Pennyfeathers, who had put the idea of psychical research into the captain's head.

Promptly at half-past eight, therefore, he joined the little party in the captain's cabin. Miss Depew, in her demi-toilette, looked more

Gibsonish than ever, and she smiled at him bewitchingly with a smile as hard and brilliant as diamonds. Mrs. Pennyfeather looked like a large artificial chrysanthemum; and she examined his black tie and dinner-jacket with the wickedly observant eye of a cockatoo. Three times in the first five minutes she made his hand travel over his shirt front to find out which stud had broken loose. They had driven him nearly mad in his stateroom that evening, and he had turned his trunk inside out, in the process of dressing, to find some socks.

Moreover, he had left his door unlocked. He was growing reckless. Perhaps the high sentiments of everyone on board had made him trustful. If he had seen the purser exploring the room and poking under his berth he might have felt uneasy, for that was what the purser was doing at this moment. Mr. Neilsen might have been even more mystified if he had seen the strange objects which the purser had laid, for the moment, on his pillow. One of them looked singularly like a rocket of the kind which ships use for signalling purposes. But Mr. Neilsen could not see; and so he was only worried by the people around him.

Captain Abbey seemed to have washed his face in the sunset. He was larger, and more

like a marine Weller than ever, in his best blue and gilt. And Mr. Pennyfeather was just dapper Mr. Pennyfeather, with his beard freshly brushed.

"You've never been in London, Miss Depew?" said Captain Abbey reproachfully, while the Pennyfeathers prepared the ouija-board. "Ah, but you ought to see the Thames at Westminster Bridge! No doubt the Amazon and the Mississippi, considered as *rivers*, are all right in their way. They're ten times bigger than our smoky old river at 'ome. But the Thames is more than a river, Miss Depew. The Thames is liquid 'istory."

As soon as the ouija-board was ready they began their experiment. Mr. Neilsen thought he had never known anything more sickeningly illustrative of the inferiority of all intellects to the German. He tried the ouija-board with Mrs. Pennyfeather, and the accursed thing scrawled one insane syllable.

It looked like "cows," but Miss Depew decided that it was "crows." Then Mrs. Pennyfeather tried it with Captain Abbey, and they got nothing at all except an occasional giggle from the lady to the effect that she didn't think the captain could be making his mind a blank. Then Mr. Pennyfeather tried it with Miss

Depew, with no result but the obvious delight of that sprightly middle-aged gentleman at touching her polished finger-tips, and the long, uneven line which was driven across the paper by the ardour of his pressure. Finally, Miss Depew, subduing the glint of her smile slightly, a change as from diamonds to rubies, but hard and clear-cut as ever, declared, on the strength of Mr. Neilsen's first attempt, that he seemed to be the most sensitive of the party, and she would like to try it with him.

Strangely enough, Mr. Neilsen felt a little mollified, even a little flattered, by the suggestion. He was quite ready to touch the finger-tips of Miss Depew and try again. She had a small hand. He could not help remembering the legend that, after the Creator had made the rosy fingers of the first woman, the devil had added those tiny gem-like nails; but he thought the devil in this case had done his work like an expert jeweller. Mr. Neilsen was always ready to bow before efficiency, even if its weapons were no more imposing than a manicure set.

The ouija-board was quiet for a moment or two. Then it began to move to and fro across the paper. Mr. Neilsen did not understand why. Miss Depew certainly looked quite blank; and the movement seemed to be independent of

their own consciousness. It was making marks on the paper, and that was all he expected it to do. At last Miss Depew withdrew her hand and exclaimed :

"It's too exhausting. Read it, somebody."

Mr. Pennyfeather picked it up, and laughed.

"Looks to me as if the spirits are a bit erratic to-night. But the writing's clear enough, in a scrawly kind of way. I'm afraid it's utter nonsense."

He began to read it aloud :

"*Exquisitely amusing! Uncle Hyacinth's little appendix . . .*"

At this point he was interrupted. Mr. Neilsen had risen to his feet as if he were being hauled up by an invisible rope attached to his neck. His movement was so startling that Mrs. Pennyfeather emitted a faint mouse-like screech. They all stared at him, waiting to see what he would do next.

But Mr. Neilsen recovered himself with great presence of mind. He drew a handkerchief from his trouser-pocket, as if he had risen only for that purpose. Then he sat down again.

"Bardon me," he said, "I thought I vos aboud to sneeze. Vot is the rest of id?"

He sat very still now, but his mouth opened

and shut dumbly, like the mouth of a fish, while Mr. Pennyfeather read the message through to the end:

"*Exquisitely amusing! Uncle Hyacinth's little appendix removed. Throat enlarged. Consuming immense quantities pork sausages, also onions wholesale. Best greetings. Fond love. Kisses.*"

"I'm afraid they're playing tricks on us to-night," said Mr. Pennyfeather. "They do sometimes, you know. Or, it may be fragments of two or three messages which have got mixed."

"Hold on, though," said the captain. "Didn't you send a wireless the other day, Mr. Neilsen, to somebody by the name of Hyacinth?"

"Well—ha! ha! ha! It goncerned somebody of that name. I suppose I must have moved my hand ungonsciously. I've been thinking about him a great deal. He's ill, you see."

"How very interestin'!" cooed Mrs. Pennyfeather, drawing her chair closer. "Have you really an uncle named Hyacinth? Such a pretty name for an elderly gentleman, isn't it? Doesn't the rest of the message mean anything to you, then, Mr. Neilsen?"

He stared at her and then he stared at the message, licking his lips. Then he stared at Captain Abbey and Miss Depew. He could read nothing in their faces but the most childlike amusement. The thing that chilled his heart was the phrase about "onions." He could not remember the meaning, but it looked like one of those innocent commercial phrases which had been embodied in the code. Was it possible that in his agitation he had unconsciously written this thing down?

He crumpled up the paper, and thrust it into his side pocket. Then he sniggered mirthlessly. Greatly to his relief, the captain began talking to Miss Depew, as if nothing had happened, about the Tower of London; and he was able to slip away before they brought the subject down to the period of the war.

3

Mr. Neilsen may have been a very sceptical person. Perhaps his intellect was really paralysed by panic; for the first thing he did on reaching his stateroom that night was to get out the code and translate the message of the ouija-board. It was impossible that it should mean anything; but he was impelled by something stronger than his reason. He broke into a cold sweat when he discovered that it had as definite a meaning as any of the preceding messages; and, though it was not the kind of thing that would have been sent by wireless, he recognised that it was probably far nearer the truth than any of them. This is how he translated it:

"*Imperative sink Hispaniola after treacherous threat. Wiser sacrifice life. Otherwise death penalty inevitable. Flight abroad futile. Enviable position. Fine opportunity hero.*"

He could not understand how this thing had happened. Was it possible that, in great crises, an agitated mind, two thousand miles away, might create a corresponding disturbance in

another mind which was concentrated on the same problem? Had he evolved these phrases of the code out of some subconscious memory, and formed them into an intelligible sentence? Trickery was the only other alternative, and that was out of the question. All these people were of inferior intellect. Besides, they were in the same peril themselves, and obviously ignorant of it. His code had never been out of his possession. Yet he felt as if he had been under the microscope. What did it mean? He felt as if he were going mad.

He crept into his berth in a dazed and blundering way, like a fly that has just crawled out of a honey pot. After an hour of feverish tossing from side to side, he sank into a doze only to dream of the bald-headed man in Harrods' who wanted to sell him a safety waistcoat, the exact model of the one that saved Lord Winchelsea. The most hideous series of nightmares followed. He dreamed that the sides of the ship were transparent, and that he saw the periscopes of innumerable submarines foaming alongside through the black water. He could not cry out, though he was the only soul aboard that saw them, for his mouth seemed to be fastened with official sealing-wax, black sealing-wax, stamped with the German eagle. Then, to his horror,

he saw the quick phosphorescent lines of a dozen torpedoes darting towards the *Hispaniola* from all points of the compass. A moment later there was an explosion that made him leap, gasping and fighting for breath, out of his berth. But this was not a dream. It was the most awful explosion he had ever heard, and his room stank of sulphur. He seized the cork jacket that hung on his wall, pulled his door open, and rushed out, trying to fasten it round him as he went.

When the steward arrived, with the purser, they had the stateroom to themselves, and, after the former had thrown the remains of the rocket through the porthole, together with the ingenious contrivance which had prevented it from doing any real damage under Mr. Neilsen's berth, the purser helped him with his own hands to carry the brass-bound trunk down to his office.

"We'll tell him that his room was on fire, and we had to throw the contents overboard. We'll give him another room, and a suit of old clothes for to-morrow. Then we can examine all his possessions at leisure. Lock his room up. That's right. I hope he doesn't jump overboard in his fright. It's lucky that we warned the people in the other staterooms. It made a devil of a row. You'd better go and look for him as soon as we get this thing out of the way."

But it was easier to look for Mr. Neilsen than to find him. The steward ransacked the ship for three-quarters of an hour, and he began to fear that the worst had happened. He was peering round anxiously on the boat deck when he heard an explosive cough somewhere over his head. He looked up into the rigging, as if he expected to see Mr. Neilsen in the cross-trees; but nobody was to be seen, except the watchman in the crow's nest, dark against the stars.

"Mr. Neilsen," he called. "Mr. Neilsen!"

"Are you galling me?" a hoarse voice replied. It seemed to come out of the air, above and behind the steward. He turned with a start, and a moment later he beheld the head of Mr. Neilsen bristling above the thwarts of number six boat. He had been sitting in the bottom of the boat to shelter himself from the wind, and some symbolistic Puck had made him fasten his cork jacket round his pyjamas, very firmly, but upside down, so that he certainly would have been drowned if he had been thrown into the water.

"It's all right, Mr. Neilsen," said the steward; "the danger is over."

"Are ve torpedoed?" The round-eyed visage with the bristling hair was looking more

and more like von Hindenburg after a defeat, and it did not seem inclined to budge.

"No, sir. The shock damaged your room a little, but we must have left the enemy behind now. You had a lucky escape, sir."

"My Gott! I should think so, indeed! The ship is not damaged in any way?"

"No, sir. There was a blaze in your room, and I'm afraid they had to throw all your things overboard. But the purser says he can rig you out in the morning; and we have another room ready for you."

"Then I vill gum down," said Mr. Neilsen. And he did so. His bare feet paddled after the steward on the cold, wet deck. At the companion-way they met the shadowy figure of the captain.

"I'm afraid you've 'ad an unpleasant upset, Mr. Neilsen," he said.

"Onbleasant! It vos derrible, derrible! But you see, Captain, I vos correct. And this is only the beginning, aggording to my information. I hope now you vill take every pregaution."

"They must have mistaken us for a British ship, Mr. Neilsen, I'm afraid. I'm having the ship lighted up so that they can't mistake us again. You see? I've got a searchlight play-

ing on the Argentine flag aloft; and we've got the name of the ship in illuminated letters, three feet high, all along the hull. They could read it ten miles away. Come and look."

Mr. Neilsen looked with deepening horror.

"But dis is madness," he gurgled. "The *Hispaniola* is marked, I tell you, for gomplete destruction!"

The captain shook his head with a smile of scepticism that withered Mr. Neilsen's last hope.

"Very well, then, I should brefer an inside cabin this time."

"Yes, you don't get so much fresh air, of course; but I think it's better on the 'ole. If we're torpedoed we shall all go down together. But you're safer from gunfire in an inside room."

The unhappy figure in pyjamas followed the steward without another word. The captain watched him with a curious expression on his broad red face. He was not an unkindly man; and if this German in the cork jacket had not been so ready to let everybody else aboard drown, he might have felt the sympathy for him that most people feel towards the fat cowardice of Falstaff. But he thought of the women and children, and his heart hardened.

As soon as Mr. Neilsen had gone below the lights were turned off, and the ship went on her way like a shadow. The captain proceeded to send out some wireless messages of his own. In less than an hour he received an answer, and almost immediately the ship's course was changed.

It was a strange accident that nobody on board seemed to have any clothes that would fit Mr. Neilsen on the following day. He appeared at lunch in a very old suit which the dapper little Mr. Pennyfeather had worn out in the bank. Mr. Neilsen was now a perfect illustration of the schooldays of von Hindenburg at some period when that awful effigy had outgrown his father's pocket and burst most of his buttons. But his face was so haggard and grey that even the women pitied him. At four o'clock in the afternoon the captain asked him to come up to the bridge, and began to put him out of his misery.

"Mr. Neilsen," he said, "I'm afraid you've had a very anxious voyage; and, though it's very unusual, I think, in the circumstances, it's only fair to put you on another ship, if you prefer it. You'll 'ave your chance this evening. Do you see those little smudges of smoke out yonder? Those are some British patrol boats; and, if you

wish, I'm sure I can get them to take you off and land you in Plymouth. There's a fine statue of Sir Francis Drake on Plymouth 'Oe. You ought to see it. What d'you think?"

Mr. Neilsen stared at him. Two big tears of gratitude rolled down his cheeks.

"I shall be most grateful," he murmured.

"They're wonderful little beggars, those patrol boats," the captain continued. "Always on the side of the angels, as you said so feelingly at the concert. They're the police of the seas. They guide and guard us all, neutrals as well. They sweep up the mines. They warn us. They pilot us. They pick us up when we're drowning, and they give us 'ot coffee. In fact, whatever we may think about the Governments, we've got to admit that these little patrol boats are doing the work of civilisation. Probably you don't like the British very much in Sweden, but——"

"I have no national prejudices," Mr. Neilsen said hastily. "I shall indeed be most grateful."

"Very well, then," said the captain, "we'll let 'em know."

At half-past six two of the patrol boats were alongside. They were the *Auld Robin Gray* and the *Ruth;* and they seemed to be in high

feather over some recent success. Mr. Neilsen was mystified again when he came on deck, for he could have sworn that he saw something uncommonly like his brass-bound trunk disappearing into the hold of the *Auld Robin Gray*. He was puzzled also by the tail-end of the lively conversation that was taking place between Miss Depew and the absurdly young naval officer with the lisp who was in command of the patrols:

"Oh, no! I'm afraid we don't uth the dungeonth in the Tower," said that slender youth, while Miss Depew, entirely feminine, and smiling like a morning glory now, noted all the details of his peaked cap and the gold stripes on his sleeve. "We put them in country houtheth and feed them like fighting cockth, and give them flower gardenth to walk in."

He turned to Captain Abbey joyously:

"That wath a corking metthage of yourth, Captain. I believe we got three of them right in the courth you would have been taking today. You'll hear from the Admiralty about thith, you know. It wath magnifithent! Good-bye!"

He saluted smartly, and, taking Mr. Neilsen tightly by the arm, helped him down to the deck of the *Ruth*.

"Good-bye and good luck!" called Captain Abbey. He beamed over the bulwarks of the *Hispaniola*, like a large red harvest moon through the thin mist that began to drift between them. "Good-bye, Mr. Neilsen!" called Mr. and Mrs. Pennyfeather, waving frantically. "Good-bye, Herr Krauss!" said Miss Depew, and the dainty malice of her voice smote Mr. Neilsen like a ray of light. But he recovered quickly, for he was of an elastic disposition. He was already looking forward to the home comforts which he knew would be supplied by these idiotic British for the duration of the war.

The young officer smiled and saluted the ladies again. He was a very ladylike young man, Mr. Neilsen had thought, and an obvious example of the degeneracy of England. But Mr. Neilsen's plump arm was still bruised by the steely grip with which that lean young hand had helped him aboard, so his conclusions were mixed.

The engines of the *Ruth* were thumping now, and the *Hispaniola* was melting away over the smooth grey swell. They watched her for a minute or two, till she became spectral in the distance. Then the youthful representative of the British Admiralty turned, like a thoughtful host, to his prisoner.

"Would you like thum tea?" he lisped sympathetically. "Your Uncle Hyathinth mutht have given you an awfully anxiouth time."

Herr Krauss grunted inarticulately. He was looking like a very happy little von Hindenburg.

THE MAN FROM BUFFALO

II

THE MAN FROM BUFFALO

THE patrol-boats had been buffeting their way all night against wind and weather; and before daybreak the long line had lost its order. It was broken up now into little wandering loops and sections, busily comparing notes by Morse flashes and wireless.

Last evening the *Morning Glory*, a converted yacht of American ownership, had been working with forty British trawlers; and her owner, Matthew Hudson, who had obtained permission to go out with her on this trip, had watched with admiration the way in which they strung themselves over twenty miles of confused sea, keeping their exact distances till nightfall. This morning, as he lurched in gleaming oilskins up and down the monkey-house (irreverent name for his canvas-screened bridge), he could see only three of his companions—the *Dusty Miller*, *Christmas Day* and *Betsy Barton*.

They were all having a lively time. They swooped like herring-gulls into the broad troughs

of the swell, where the black water looked like liquid marble, with white veins of foam in it. Morning-coloured rainbows dripped from their bows as they rose again through the green sun-lit crests. But the *Morning Glory* was the brightest and the liveliest of them all. The seas had been washing her decks all night. Little pools of colour shone in the wet, crumpled oil-skins of the crew, and the tarpaulin that covered the gun in her bow gleamed like a cloak dropped there by the Angel of the Dawn.

"When, like the morning mist in early day,
Rose from the foam the daughter of the sea,"

Matthew Hudson quoted to himself. He was full of poetry this morning, while he waited for his breakfast; and the radiant aspect of the weapon in the bow reminded him of something else—if the smell of the frying bacon would not blow his way and distract his mind—something about "celestial armouries." Was it Tennyson or Milton who had written it? There was a passage about guns in "Paradise Lost." He must look it up.

At this moment the *Morning Glory* ran into a bank of white mist, which left him nothing to see from the bridge. The engines were slowed down, and he decided that it was time for breakfast.

The cabin where he breakfasted with the skipper was very little changed, except that it seemed by contrast a little more palatial than in peace-time. There had been many changes in the exterior of the ship. Her white and gold had been washed over with service grey; and many beautiful fittings had been removed to make way for grimmer work. But within there were still some corners of the yacht that shone like gems in a setting of lead. The *Morning Glory* had been a very beautiful boat. She had been built for summer cruising among the pine-clad islands off the coast of Maine, or to carry her master down to the palms of his own little island off the coast of Florida, where he basked for a month or so among the ripening oranges, the semi-tropical blossom and the cardinal birds, while Buffalo cleared the worst of the snow from her streets. For Matthew Hudson was a man of many millions, which he had made in almost the only country where millions can be made honestly and directly out of its enormous natural resources. His own method had been a very simple one, though it required great organising ability and a keen eye and brain at the outset. All he had done was to harness a river at the right place, and make it drive a light and power plant. But he had done it on a scale

which enabled him to drive, from this one central station, all the electric trolleys and light all the lamps in more than a hundred cities. He could supply all the light and all the power they wanted to cities a hundred miles away from his plant, and he talked of sending it three hundred miles farther. Now that the system was established, it worked as easily as the river flowed; and his power-house was a compact little miracle of efficiency. All that the casual visitor could see was a long, quiet room, in which it seemed that a dozen large clocks were slumbrously ticking. These were the indicators, from the dials of which the amount of power distributed over a district as big as England could be read by the two leisurely men on duty. In the meantime, night and day, the river poured power of another kind into the treasury of Matthew Hudson. His life reminded one of the room with the slumbrous clocks. He was indeed, as his own men described it, pre-eminently the man behind the gun. When the *Morning Glory* had been accepted by the naval authorities, he had obtained permission to equip her for her new work in European waters at his own cost, and to make certain experiments in the equipment. The Admiralty had not looked with favour on all his ideas, which were by no means suitable

for general use in the patrol fleet. But Matthew Hudson had too many weapons at work against Germany for them to deny him a sentimental pleasure in his own yacht. He seemed to have some particular purpose of his own in carrying out his ideas; and so it came about that the *Morning Glory* was regarded as very much of a mystery.

The two men breakfasted in silence. They were both drowsy, for there had been a U-boat alarm during the night, which had kept them very much awake; but Hudson was roused from his reverie over the second rasher by a loud report, followed by a confused shouting above, and the stoppage of the engines.

"That's not a submarine!" said the skipper. "What the devil is it?" and the two men rushed on deck.

The mist had lifted a little; and, looming out of it, a few hundred yards away, there was something that looked at first glance like a great grey cliff. For a fraction of a moment Hudson thought they had almost run ashore in the mist. At the second glance he knew that the grey mist-wreathed monster before him was an armoured ship, and the skipper enlightened him further by saying in a matter-of-fact voice:

"That settles it—enemy cruiser—we are

stopped, broadside on. They've got a couple of guns trained on us, and they're sending a boat. What's the next move?"

Matthew Hudson's face was a curious study at this moment. It suggested a leopard endowed with the sense of humour. The fine straight nose, grey moustache, and amazingly clear eyes, were lit with an almost boyish jubilation. It was a somewhat fierce jubilation, but it undoubtedly twinkled with the humour of the New World. Then he asked the skipper a mysterious question:

"Is it impossible?"

"Impossible. We're in the wrong position, and if we try to get right, they'll blow us to bits. Besides, they'll be aboard in half a minute. We're drifting a little in the right direction; but it will be too late. They'll search the ship."

"How long will it take us to drift into the right position?"

"If we go on like this, about five minutes. But it will be all over by then."

"Look here, Davis, I'll try to detain them on deck. You know, Americans have a reputation for oratory. You'd better go through my stateroom. And, look here, I'll be the skipper for the time being. I'm afraid they'll want to take Matthew Hudson prisoner, so I'll be the

kind of American they'll recognise—Commander Jefferson B. Thrash, out of the best British fiction. Tell the men there. That's right. I don't want to be playing the fool in Ruhleben for the next three years."

A few moments later, a step at a time, Davis disappeared into Hudson's stateroom, which lay in the fore part of the ship. Two other men prepared to slip after him, by lounging casually in the companion-way, while the men in front moved a little closer to screen them. They seized their chance as the German boat stopped, twenty yards away from the *Morning Glory*, and the officer in command announced through a megaphone, in very good English, that he was in a great hurry. They were friends, he said, and there was no need for alarm, so long as the *Morning Glory* carried out all instructions. All that they wanted was the confidential chart of the British mine-fields, which the *Morning Glory* of course possessed, and all other confidential papers of a similar kind. If the *Morning Glory* did not carry out his instructions in every detail, the guns of the cruiser would sink her. He was now coming aboard to secure the papers.

"I guess that's all right, Captain," bawled Matthew Hudson, in an entirely new voice, and

the accent which Europe accepts as American, with about as much reason as America would have for accepting the Lancashire, Yorkshire and Glasgow dialects, all rolled into one, as English. The quiet member of the Century Club had disappeared, and the golden, remote Wild-Westerner had arisen. In half a minute more the German officer and half a dozen armed sailors were standing on the deck of the *Morning Glory*.

"So, you see, England does not gompletely rule the waves," was the opening remark of the officer, who had not yet received the full benefit of Hudson's adopted accent.

"Been finding it stormy in the canal, Cap?" drawled Hudson. "Don't blame it on me, anyway. I'm a good Amurrican—Jefferson B. Thrash, of Buffalo."

"Is this an American ship? I must regret to find an American ship fighting her best friends."

"Well, Cap, I confess I haven't much use for the British myself, not since the British Press talked about my picture post-card smile by which they unconsciously meant that among the effete aristocracies of Europe they were not used to seeing good teeth. They lack humour, sir. To regard good teeth as abnormal shows

a lack of humour on the part of the British Press. However, as George Bernard Shaw says, President Wilson has put it up to the German people in this way—'Become a republic, and we'll let up on you: go on Kaisering, and we'll smash you.'"

"I am in a great hurry," the German officer replied. "I must ask you at once for your confidential papers."

"That's all right, Admiral," said Hudson. "I've sent a man down below to get them out of my steamer trunk. They'll be here right away."

He looked reflectively at the guns of the cruiser, and added ingratiatingly:

"Of course, I disapprove of George Bernard Shaw vulgarising the language of diplomacy in that way. I would rather interpret President Wilson's message as saying to the German people, in courteous phrase: 'Emerge from twelfth-century despotism into twentieth-century democracy. Send the Imperial liar who misrules you to join Nick Romanoff on his Crimean ranch. Give the furniture-stealing Crown Prince a long term in any Sing-Sing you like to choose; and we will again buy dye-stuffs and toys of you, and sell you our beans and bacon.'"

"Are you aware that you endanger your life by this language? Do you see those guns?"

Matthew Hudson looked at the guns, and spat over the side of the ship meditatively. Then he looked the questioner squarely in the eye. He had taken the measure of his man, and he only needed three and a half minutes more. Any question that could be raised was clear gain; and the cruiser would certainly not use her guns while the German crew was aboard the *Morning Glory*.

"Yes," he said, "and you'd better not use your guns till you get those confidential papers, for there's not a chance that you'll find them without my help. They're worth having, and I've no objection to handing them over, though I don't lay much store by your promise not to shoot afterwards. When you've got them, how am I to know that you won't shoot anyway, and (what's the latest language of your diplomacy?) 'leave no traces'? By Cripes, there's no mushy sentiment about your officials! No, sir, 'leave no traces,' and they said it about neutrals, remember. 'Leave no traces!' That's virile, that's red-blooded stuff! The effete humanitarianism of our democracy, sir, would call that murder. In England they would call it 'bloody murder.' I don't agree. I think this war is

war. Of course, it's awkward for non-combatants——"

"With regard to the crews, it has been announced in Germany that they would be saved and kept prisoners in the submarines. Your man is taking too long to find your papers. I can allow you only one minute more."

"He'll be right back, Captain, with all the confidential goods you want. But—say—between one sailor-man and another, that story about planning to hide crews and passengers aboard the submarines must have been meant for our Middle West. Last time I was on a submarine I had to sleep behind the cooking stove, and then the commander had to sit up all night. It's the right stuff for the prairies, though. Ever hear of our Senator, Cap, who wanted to know why the women and kids on the *Lusitania* weren't put into the watertight compartments? They cussed the Cunard Company from hell to breakfast out Kalamazoo way for that scandalous oversight. Wonder what's keeping that son of a gun!"

"I can wait no longer. The ship must be searched by my own men. Are the papers in your cabin?"

"Sure. But I can save you a lot of time, Captain. I'll lead you right to them."

The *Morning Glory* had drifted round till her nose was now pointing almost directly amidships of the cruiser. Matthew Hudson took a long, affectionate look at the guns and the guns' crew that kept watch over his behaviour from the grey monster ahead; then he led the way below to his stateroom.

The Hamburg-Amerika Line had many a less imposing room than this, the only part of the yacht that retained all its old aspect. It ran the whole breadth of the ship, and had two port-holes on each side. There was a brass bedstead, with a telephone beside it, and an electric reading lamp. There were half a dozen other electric bulbs overhead.

"I don't sleep very well, Cap, so I decided to keep this bit of sinful splendour for my own use. Bathroom, you see"—he opened a tiny door near the bed, and showed the compact little room, with its white bath-tub let into the floor.

This was too much for the German officer.

"Where do you keep your confidential papers?" he bellowed, levelling a revolver at the maddeningly complacent American, while three of his men behind him closed up, ready for action.

"Better not shoot, Admiral, for you won't find them without my help, and I'm going to

hand you the goods in half a minute. I can't quite remember where I put them. There's some confidential stuff in here, I think."

He unlocked a drawer, and pulled out a bundle of papers. A small white object dropped from the bundle and lay on the floor between him and the German. It was a baby's shoe. Hudson nodded at it, as he looked through the papers.

"Got any kids, Cap? That came from Queenstown. Ah, this looks like your chart. No. Came from Queenstown, I say. It was a little girl belonging to a friend of mine in the City of Brotherly Love. Lots of 'em on the *Lusitania*, you know. We collect souvenirs in America, and I asked him for this as a keepsake when I came on this gunning expedition. He kept the other for himself. She was a pretty little thing. Only six. Used to call me Uncle Jack."

He stole a look through the porthole; then drew another document from the drawer.

"Ah, now I remember. Here's the stuff you want—some of it, anyhow. Tied round with yellow ribbon. Take it, Cap. I wish I hadn't seen that little shoe, but you've got the drop on me this time, and I suppose it's my duty to save the lives of the men. There's a

good bit of information there about the mine-fields."

The German hurriedly examined the papers, while Hudson hummed to himself, as he stared through the porthole :

"Around her liddle neck she wore a yaller ribbon,
She wore it in December, and the merry month of May ;
And when, oh, when they asked her why in hell she wore it,
She said she loved a sailor, a sailor, a sailor,
But he was wrecked and drownded in Mississippi Bay."

"This is very good," said the German, "and very useful. I think we shall not require more of you, though it will be necessary to destroy your ship and make you prisoners."

"Why, certainly. I didn't suppose you could keep your contract in war-time. You can't leave traces of a deal like this. But while you're about it, you may as well have all the confidential stuff."

"Good! Good!" said the German, strutting towards him. "So there's more to come! I am glad you see the advantage of being too proud to fight, my friend, eh!"

Matthew Hudson's eye twinkled. His slouch began to slip away from him like a loose coat, leaving once more the quiet, upstanding member of the Century Club.

"Of course," he said, "you would make that mistake. The British made it. They forgot that it was said about Mexico. But there are times also when, for diplomatic reasons, it is necessary to talk."

He had resumed his natural voice.

"When you are getting ready, for instance. This is where we keep the real stuff."

He crossed the cabin, and the German watched him closely, with a puzzled expression, covering him with his revolver.

"No treachery," he said. "What does this mean? You are not the man you are pretending to be!"

Hudson laughed, and tossed him a little scrap of bunting, which he had been holding crumpled up in his hand.

"Ever seen that flag before?" he said.

The German stared at it, his eyes growing round with amazement.

"The Kaiser's flag has flown on this yacht at Kiel regatta many a time," said Hudson. "His Imperial Majesty used to come and lunch with me. I don't advise you to shoot. He might remember some of my cigars. He gave me that flag himself. Of course, I shan't use it again—not till it's been sprinkled with holy water. But I thought you might like a little

exhibition of shirt-sleeve navalism, as I suppose you'd call it. Most Europeans like us to live up to their ideas of us. The British do. Ever hear of Senator Martin? Whenever he's in London and goes to see his friends at the House of Commons, he wears a sombrero and a red cowboy shirt. He says they expect it and like it. He wouldn't dare to do it in New York. As a fact, you know, we invented the electric telegraph and the submarine, and a lot of little things that you fellows have been stealing from us. Do you hear that? "

A faint sound, like the whirring of an electric fan under water, came to them through the port-holes; and Hudson pulled open the door that led into the bows of the ship.

"Gott! Gott!" cried the German, and his men echoed it inarticulately; for there, in the semi-darkness of the bows of the *Morning Glory*, they saw the dim shapes of seamen crouching beside two gleaming torpedo tubes. The torpedoes had just been discharged.

"You're too late to save your ship," said Matthew Hudson. "If you want to save your own skins you'd better keep still, and listen for a moment."

Then came a concussion, which rocked the *Morning Glory* like a child's cradle, and sent her

German visitors lurching and sprawling round the brass bedstead. When they recovered they found a dozen revolvers gleaming in front of their noses.

"Before we say anything more about this," said Hudson, "let's go upstairs and look. Do you mind giving me that little shoe at your feet there?"

The officer turned a shade whiter than the shoe. Then, stooping, he picked it up, and handed the tiny relic to Hudson, who thrust it into his breast-pocket.

"Thank you," he said. "Now, if you will all leave your guns on this bed, we'll go upstairs and see the traces."

When they reached the deck there was something that looked like the leaning tower of Pisa projecting from the water, four hundred yards away. Round it there seemed to be a mass of drowning flies.

"It's not a pleasant sight, is it?" said Hudson. "But it's good to know they were all fighting men, ready to kill or be killed. No women and children amongst them. The *Lusitania* must have looked much worse than this."

"My brother is on board! Are you not trying to save them?" gasped the officer.

Hudson took out the little shoe again and looked at it. Then he turned to the German boat's crew, where they huddled, sick with fear, amidships.

"Take your boat and pick up as many as you can," he said.

"It is not safe—not till she sinks," a guttural voice replied.

Almost on the word, the cruiser went down with a rush. The sleek waters and the white mists closed above her, while the *Morning Glory* rocked again like a child's cradle.

"That is true," said Matthew Hudson to the shivering figure beside him. "And we've got as many as we can handle on the ship. If we took more of you aboard, according to the laws laid down in your text-books, you'd cut our throats, and call us idiotic Yankees for trusting you. Please don't weep. We sent out a call a minute ago for the *Betsy Barton* and the *Dusty Miller* and the *Christmas Day*. I'm not an effete humanitarian myself; but the men on these trawlers aren't bad sorts. I hope they'll pick up your brother."

THE LOG OF THE "EVENING STAR"

III

THE LOG OF THE "EVENING STAR"

1

We were sitting in the porch of a low white bungalow with masses of purple bougainvillea embowering its eaves. A ruby-throated humming-bird, with green wings, flickered around it. The tall palms and the sea were whispering together. Over the water, the West was beginning to fill with that Californian sunset which is the most mysterious in the world, for one is conscious that it is the fringe of what Europeans call the East, and that, looking westward across the Pacific, our faces are turned towards the dusky myriads of Asia. All along the Californian coast there is a touch of incense in the air, as befits that silent orchard of the gods where dawn and sunset meet and intermingle; and though it is probably caused by some gardener burning the dead leaves of the eucalyptus trees, one might well believe that one breathed the scent of the joss-sticks, wafted

across the Pacific from the land of paper lanterns.

A Japanese servant, in a white duck suit, marched like a ghostly little soldier across the lawn. The great hills behind us quietly turned to amethysts. The lights of Los Angeles, ten miles away to the north, began to spring out like stars in that amazing air beloved of the astronomer; and the evening star itself, over the huge, slow breakers crumbling into lilac-coloured foam, looked bright enough to be a companion of the city lights.

"I should like to show you the log of the *Evening Star*," said my visitor, who was none other than Moreton Fitch, president of the Insurance Company of San Francisco. "I think it may interest you as evidence that our business is not without its touches of romance. I don't mean what you mean," he added cheerfully, as I looked up smiling. "The *Evening Star* was a schooner running between San Francisco and Tahiti and other places in the South Seas. She was insured in our Company. One April she was reported overdue. After search had been made, she was posted as lost in the maritime exchanges. There was no clue to what had happened, and we paid the insurance money, believing she had foundered with all hands.

"Two months later we got word from Tahiti that the *Evening Star* had been found drifting about in a dead calm, with all sails set, but not a soul aboard. Everything was in perfect order, except that the ship's cat was lying dead in the bows, baked to a bit of seaweed by the sun. Otherwise, there wasn't the slightest trace of any trouble. The tables below were laid for a meal, and there was plenty of water aboard."

"Were any of the boats missing?"

"No; she only carried three boats, and all were there. When she was discovered two of the boats were on deck as usual, and the third was towing astern. None of the men has been heard of from that day to this. The amazing part of it was not only the absence of anything that would account for the disappearance of the crew, but the clear evidence that they had been intending to stay, in the fact that the tables were laid for a meal and then abandoned. Besides, where had they gone, and how? There are no magic carpets, even in the South Seas And this wasn't in wartime, remember.

"The best brains of our Company puzzled over the mystery for a year or more; but at the end of the time nothing had turned up and

we had come out by the same door by which we had entered. No theory, even, seemed to fit the case at all; and in most mysteries there is room for a hundred theories. There were twelve persons aboard, and we investigated the history of them all. There were three American seamen, all of the domesticated kind, with respectable old mothers in gold-rimmed spectacles at home. There were five Kanakas of the mildest type, as easy to handle as an infant-school. There was a Japanese cook, who was something of an artist, used to spend his spare time in painting things to palm off on the unsuspecting connoisseur as the work of an obscure pupil of Hokusai, which I suppose he might have been in a way. I am told he was scrupulously careful never to tell a direct lie about it.

"Then there was Harper, the mate, rather an interesting young fellow, with the *wanderlust*. He had been pretty well educated. I believe he had spent a year or two at one of the Californian colleges. Altogether, about the most harmless kind of a ship's family that you could pick up anywhere between the Golden Gate and the Baltic. Then there was Captain Burgess, who was the most domesticated of them all, for he had his wife with him on this voyage. They had only been married about

three months. She was the widow of the former captain of the *Evening Star*, a fellow named Dayrell, and she had often been on the ship before. In fact, they were all old friends of the ship. Except one or two of the Kanakas, all the men had sailed on the *Evening Star* for something like two years under Captain Dayrell. Burgess himself had been his mate. Dayrell had only been dead about six months, and the only criticism we ever heard against anybody aboard was made by some of Dayrell's relatives, who thought the widow might have waited more than three months before marrying the newly promoted Burgess. They suggested, of course, that there must have been something between them before Dayrell was out of the way. But I hardly believed it. In any case, it threw no light on the mystery."

"What sort of a man was Burgess?"

"Big, burly fellow, with a fat, white face and curious little black eyes, like huckleberries in a lump of dough. He was very silent and inclined to be religious. He used to read Emerson and Carlyle, quite an unusual sort of sea captain. There was a 'Sartor Resartus' in the cabin, with a lot of the queerest passages marked in pencil. What can you make of it?"

"Nothing at all, except that there was a woman aboard. What was she like?"

"She was one of our special Californian mixtures, touch of Italian, touch of Irish, touch of American, but Italian predominated, I think. She was a good deal younger than Burgess; and one of the clerks in our office who had seen her described her as a 'peach,' which, as you know, means a pretty woman, or if you prefer the description of her own lady friends, 'vurry attractive.'

"She had the dusky Italian beauty, black hair and eyes like black diamonds, but her face was very pale, the kind of pallor that makes you think of magnolia blossoms at dusk. She was obviously fond of bright colours, tawny reds and yellows, but they suited her. If I had to give you my impression of her in a single word, I should say that she looked like a gipsy. You know the song, 'Down the World with Marna,' don't you? Well, I could imagine a romantic vagabond singing it about her. By the by, she had rather a fine voice herself. Used to sing sentimental songs to Dayrell and his friends in Frisco—'Love's Old Sweet Song,' and that sort of stuff. Apparently they took it very seriously. Several of them told me that if she had been trained—well, you know the old story

—every prima donna would have had to retire from business. I fancy they were all a little in love with her. The curious thing was that after Dayrell's death she gave up her singing altogether. Now, I think I have told you all the facts about the ship's company."

"Didn't you say there was a log you wanted to show me?"

"There were no ship's papers of any kind, and no log was found on the derelict; but a week or two ago we had a visit from the brother of the Japanese cook, who made us all feel like fifteen cents before the wisdom of the East. I have to go over and see him to-morrow afternoon. He is a fisherman, lives on the coast, not far from here. I'd like you to see what I call the log of the *Evening Star*. I won't say any more about it now. It isn't quite worked out yet; but it looks as if it's going to be interesting. Will you come—to-morrow afternoon? I'll call for you at a quarter after two. It won't take us long in the automobile. This is where he lives, see."

I switched on the electric light in the porch, while Fitch spread out a road-map, and pointed to our destination on the morrow. The Californian night comes quickly, and the tree-toads that make it musical were chirruping and purr-

ing all around us as we walked through the palms and the red-tasselled pepper trees to his car. Somewhere among the funereal clouds and poplar-like spires of the eucalyptus a mocking-bird began to whistle one of his many parts, and a delicious whiff of orange blossom blew on the cool night wind across a ranch of a thousand acres, mostly in fruit, but with a few trees yet in blossom, on the road to the Sunset Inn.

I watched his red rear lamp dwindling down that well-oiled road, and let the *Evening Star* go with it until the morrow, for I could make little of his yarn, except that Fitch was not a man to get excited over trifles.

2

Promptly at the time appointed on the following afternoon Fitch called for me, and a minute later we were gliding through orange groves along one of those broad, smooth roads that amaze the European whose impressions of California have been obtained from tales of the forty-niners. The keen scent of the orange blossom yielded to a tang of new incense as we turned into the Sunset boulevard and ran down the long vista of tall eucalyptus trees that stand out so darkly and distinctly against the lilac-coloured ranges of the Sierra Madre in the distance, and remind one of the poplar-bordered roads in France. Once we passed a swarthy cluster of Mexicans under a wayside palm. Big fragments, gnawed half-moons, of the blood-red, black-pipped water-melon they had been eating gleamed on the dark, oiled surface of the road, as a splash of the sunset is reflected in a dark river. Then we ran along the coast for a little way between the palms and the low white-pillared houses, all crimson poinsettias and marble, that looked as if they were meant for

the gods and goddesses of Greece, but were only the homes of a few score lotus-eating millionaires. In another minute we had turned off the good highway, and were running along a narrow, sandy road. On one side, rising from the road, were great desert hills, covered with grey-green sage-brush, tinged at the tips with rusty brown; and on the other there was a strip of sandy beach where the big slow breakers tumbled, and the unmolested pelicans waddled and brooded like goblin sentries.

In three minutes more we sighted a cluster of tiny wooden houses ahead of us, and pulled up on the outskirts of a little Japanese fishing village built along the fringe of the beach itself. It was a single miniature street, nestling under the hill on one side of the narrow road, and built along the sand on the other. Japanese signs stood over quaint little stores, with here and there a curious tinge of Americanism. "Rice cakes and Candies" were advertised by one black-haired and boyish-looking gentleman, who sat at the door of his hut playing with three brown children, one of whom squinted at us gleefully with bright sloe-black eyes. Every tiny house, even when it stood on the beach, had its own little festoon of flowers. Wistaria drooped from the jutting eaves, and—perhaps

only the Japanese could explain the miracle—tall and well-nourished red geraniums rose out of the salt seasand around their doors. A few had foregone their miracles and were content with window-boxes, but all were in blossom. In the centre of the village, on the seaward side, there was a miniature mission-house. A beautifully shaped bell swung over the roof, and there was a miniature notice-board at the door. The announcements upon it were in Japanese, but it looked as if East and West had certainly met and kissed each other there. Some of the huts had little oblong letter-boxes of grey tin, perched on stumps of bamboo fishing-poles, in front of their doors. It is a common device to help the postman in country places, where you sometimes see a letter-box on a broomstick standing half a mile from the owner's house. But here they looked curiously Japanese, perhaps because of the names inscribed upon them, or through some trick of arrangement; for a Japanese hand no sooner touches a dead staff than it breaks into cherry blossom. We stopped before one that bore the name of Y. Kato. His unpainted wooden shack was the most Japanese of all in appearance; for the yellow placard underneath the window advertising "Sweet Caporal" was balanced by a single tall pole,

planted in the sand a few feet to the right, and lifting a beautiful little bird-house high above the roof.

Moreton Fitch knocked at the door. It was opened at once by a dainty creature, a piece of animated porcelain, four feet high, with a black-eyed baby on her back; and we were ushered, with smiles, into a very bare living-room, to be greeted by the polished mahogany countenance of Kato himself, and the shell-spectacled intellectual pallor of Howard Knight, professor in the University of California.

"Amazing, amazing, perfectly amazing," said Knight, who was wearing two elderly tea-roses in his cheeks now from excitement. "I have just finished it. Sit down and listen."

"Wait a moment," said Fitch, "I want our friend here to see the original log of the *Evening Star*."

"Of course," said Knight, "a human document of the utmost value." Then, to my surprise, he took me by the arm and led me in front of a large kakemono, which was the only decoration on the walls of the room.

"This is what Mr. Fitch calls the log of the *Evening Star*," he said. "It was found among the effects of Mr. Kato's brother on the schooner; and, fortunately, it was claimed by

Mr. Kato himself. Take it to the light and examine it."

I took it to the window and looked at it with curiosity, though I did not quite see its bearing on the mystery of the *Evening Star*. It was a fine piece of work, one of those weird night pictures in which the Japanese are masters; for they know how to give you the single point of light that tells you of the unseen life around the lamp of the household or the temple. This was a picture of a little dark house, with jutting eaves, and a tiny rose light in one window, overlooking the sea. At the brink of the sea rose a ghostly figure that might only be a drift of mist, for the curve of the vague body suggested that the off-shore wind was blowing it out to sea, while the great gleaming eyes were fixed on the lamp, and the shadowy arms outstretched towards it in hopeless longing. Sea and ghost and house were suggested in a very few strokes of the brush. All the rest, the peace and the tragic desire and a thousand other suggestions, according to the mood of the beholder, were concentrated into that single pinpoint of warm light in the window.

"Turn it over," said Fitch.

I obeyed him, and saw that the whole back of the kakemono, which measured about four

feet by two, was covered with a fine scroll of Japanese characters in purple copying-pencil. I had overlooked it at first, or accepted it, with the eye of ignorance, as a mere piece of Oriental decoration.

"That is what we all did," said Fitch. "We all overlooked the simple fact that Japanese words have a meaning. We didn't trouble about it—you know how vaguely one's eye travels over a three-foot sign on a Japanese tea-house—we didn't even think about it till Mr. Kato turned up in our office a week or two ago. You can't read it. No more can I. But we got Mrs. Knight here to handle it for us."

"It turns out to be a message from Harper," said Knight. "Apparently he was lying helpless in his berth, and told the Japanese to write it down. A few sentences here and there are unintelligible, owing to the refraction of the Oriental mind. Fortunately, it is Harper's own message. I have made two versions, one a perfectly literal one, which requires a certain amount of retranslation. The other is an attempt to give as nearly as possible what Harper himself dictated. This is the version which I had better read to you now. The original has various repetitions, and shows that

Harper's mind occasionally wandered, for he goes into trivial detail sometimes. But he seems to have been possessed with the idea of getting his account through to the owners; and, whenever he got an opportunity, he made Kato take up his pencil and write, so that we have a very full account."

Knight took out a note-book, adjusted his glasses, and began to read, while the ghostly original fluttered in my hand, as the night wind blew from the sea.

"A terrible thing has happened, and I think it my duty to write this, in the hope that it may fall into the hands of friends at home. I am not likely to live another twenty-four hours. The first hint that I had of anything wrong was on the night of March the fifteenth, when Mrs. Burgess came up to me on deck, looking worried, and said, 'Mr. Harper, I am in great trouble. I want to ask you a question, and I want you to give me an honest answer.' She looked round nervously, and her hands were fidgeting with her handkerchief, as if she were frightened to death. 'Whatever your answer may be,' she said, 'you'll not mention what I've said to you.' I promised her. She laid her hand on my arm and said, with the most piteous look in her face I have ever seen, 'I have no other

friends to go to, and I want you to tell me. Mr. Harper, is my husband sane?'

"I had never doubted the sanity of Burgess till that moment. But there was something in the dreadfulness of that question from a woman who had only been married a few months that seemed like a door opening into the bottomless pit.

"It seemed to explain many things that hadn't occurred to me before. I asked her what she meant, and she told me that last night Burgess had come into the cabin and waked her up. His eyes were starting out of his head, and he told her that he had seen Captain Dayrell walking on deck. She told him it was nothing but imagination, and he laid his head on his arms and sobbed like a child. He said he thought it was one of the deck hands that had just come out of the fo'c'sle, but all the men were short and smallish, and this was a big burly figure. It went ahead of him like his own shadow, and disappeared in the bows. But he knew it was Dayrell, and there was a curse on him. To-night, she said, half an hour ago, Burgess had come down to her, taking her by the throat, and sworn he would kill her if she didn't confess that Dayrell was still alive. She told him he must be crazy. 'My mind may be going,' he said, 'but

you shan't kill my soul.' And he called her a name which she didn't repeat, but began to cry when she remembered it. He said he had seen Dayrell standing in the bows with the light of the moon full on his face, and he looked so brave and upright that he knew he must have been bitterly wronged. He looked like a soldier facing the enemy, he said.

"While she was telling me this she was looking around her in a very nervous kind of way, and we both heard someone coming up behind us very quietly. We turned round, and there—as God lives—stood the living image of Captain Dayrell looking at us in the shadow of the mast. Mrs. Burgess gave a shriek that paralysed me for the moment, then she ran like a wild thing into the bows, and before anyone could stop her she climbed up and threw herself overboard. Evans and Barron were only a few yards away from her when she did it, and they both went overboard after her immediately, one of them throwing a lifebelt over ahead of him as he went. They were both good swimmers, and as the moon was bright, I thought we had only to launch a boat to pick them all up. I shouted to the Kanakas, and they all came up running. Two of the men and myself got into one of the starboard boats; and we were within

three feet of the water when I heard the crack of a revolver from somewhere in the bows of the *Evening Star*. The men, who were lowering away, let us down with a rush that nearly capsized us. There were four more shots while we were getting our oars out. I called to the men on deck, asking them who was shooting, but got no reply. I believe they were panic-stricken and had bolted into cover. We pulled round the bows, and could see nothing. There was not a sign of the woman or the two men in the water.

"We could make nobody hear us on the ship, and all this while we had seen nothing of Captain Burgess. It must have been nearly an hour before we gave up our search and tried to get aboard again. We were still unable to get any reply from the ship, and we were about to try to climb on board by the boat's falls. The men were backing her in, stern first, and we were about ten yards from the ship when the figure of Captain Dayrell appeared, leaning over the side of the *Evening Star*. He stood there against the moonlight with his face in the shadow; but we all of us recognised him, and I heard the teeth of the Kanakas chattering. They had stopped backing, and we all stared at one another. Then, as casually as if it were a joke,

Captain Dayrell stretched out his arm, and I saw the moonlight glint on his revolver. He fired at us deliberately, as if he were shooting at clay pigeons. I felt the wind of the first shot going past my head, and the two men at once began to pull hard to get out of range. The second shot missed also. At the third shot he got the man in the bows full in the face. He fell over backwards, and lay there in the bottom of the boat. He must have been killed instantaneously. At the fourth shot I felt a stinging pain on the left side of my body, but hardly realised I had been wounded at the moment. A cloud passed over the moon just then, and the way we had got on the boat carried us too far for Dayrell to aim very accurately, so that I was able to get to the oars and pull out of range. The other man must have been wounded also, for he was lying in the bottom of the boat groaning, but I do not remember seeing him hit. I managed to pull fifty yards or so and then fainted, for I was bleeding very badly.

"When I recovered consciousness I found that the bleeding had stopped, and I was able to look at the two men. Both of them were dead and quite cold, so that I must have been unconscious for some time.

"The *Evening Star* was about a hundred

yards away in the full light of the moon, but I could see nobody on deck. I sat watching her till daybreak, wondering what I should do, for there was no water or food in the boat, and I was unarmed. Unless Captain Burgess and the other men aboard could disarm Dayrell, I was quite helpless. Perhaps my wound had dulled my wits, for I was unable to think out any plan, and I sat there aimlessly for more than an hour.

"It was broad daylight, and I had drifted within fifty yards of the ship, when, to my surprise, Captain Burgess appeared on deck and hailed me. 'All right, Harper,' he said, 'come aboard.'

"I was able to scull the boat alongside, and Burgess got down into her without a word and helped me aboard. He took me down to my berth, with his arm around me, for I almost collapsed again with the effort, and he brought me some brandy. As soon as I could speak, I asked him what it all meant, and he said, 'The ship is his, Harper; we've got to give it up to him. That's what it means. I am not afraid of him by daylight, but what we shall do to-night, God only knows.' Then, just as Mrs. Burgess had told me, he put his head down on his arms, and began to sob like a child.

"'Where are the other men?' I asked him.

"'There's only you and I and Kato,' he said, 'to face it out aboard this ship.'

"With that he got up and left me, saying that he would send Kato to me with some food, if I thought I could eat. But I knew by this time that I was a dying man.

"There was only one thing I had to do, and that was to try to get this account written, and hide it somehow in the hope of someone finding it later, for I felt sure that neither Burgess nor myself would live to tell it. There was no paper in my berth, and it was Kato that thought of writing it down in this way.

"*About an hour later.*—Burgess has just been down to see me. He said that he had buried the two men who were shot in the boat. I wanted to ask him some questions, but he became so excited, it seemed useless. Neither he nor Kato seemed to have any idea where Dayrell was hiding. Kato believes, in fact, in ghosts; so that it is no use questioning him.

"I must have lost consciousness or slept very heavily since the above was written, for I remembered nothing more till nightfall, when I woke up in the pitch darkness. Kato was sitting by me, and gave me another drink of

brandy. The ship was dead still, but I felt that something had gone wrong again.

"I do not know whether my own mind is going, but we have just heard the voice of Mrs. Burgess singing one of those sentimental songs that Captain Dayrell used to be so fond of. It seemed to be down in the cabin, and when she came to the end of it I heard Dayrell's voice calling out, 'Encore! Encore!' just as he used to do. Then I heard someone running down the deck like mad, and Captain Burgess came tumbling down to us with the whites of his eyes showing. 'Did you hear it?' he said. 'Harper, you'll admit you heard it. Don't tell me I'm mad. They're in the cabin together now. Come and look at them.' Then he looked at me with a curious, cunning look, and said, 'No, you'd better stay where you are, Harper. You're not strong enough,' And he crept up on the deck like a cat.

"Something urged me to follow him, even if it took the last drop of my strength. Kato tried to dissuade me, but I drained the brandy flask, and managed to get out of my berth on to the deck by going very slowly, though the sweat broke out on me with every step. Burgess had disappeared, and there was nobody on deck. It was not so difficult to get to the skylight of

the cabin. God knows what I had expected to see, but there I did see the figure of Captain Dayrell, dressed as I had seen him in life, with a big scarf round his throat and the big peaked cap. There was an open sea-chest in the corner, with a good many clothes scattered about as if by someone who had been dressing in a hurry. It was an old chest belonging to Dayrell in the old days, and I often wondered why Burgess had left it lying there. The revolver lay on the table, and as Dayrell picked it up to load it the scarf unwound itself a little around his throat and the lower part of the face. Then, to my amazement, I recognised him."

"There," said Knight, "the log of the *Evening Star* ends, except for a brief sentence by Kato himself, which I will not read to you now."

"I wonder if the poor devil did really see," said Moreton Fitch. "And what do you suppose he did when he saw who it was?"

"Crept back to his own berth, barricaded himself in with Kato's help, finished his account, died in the night with Dayrell tapping on the door, and was neatly buried by Burgess in the morning, I suppose."

"And Burgess?"

"Tidied everything up and then jumped overboard."

"Probably—in his own clothes; for it's quite true that we did find a lot of Dayrell's old clothes in a sea-chest in the cabin. Funny idea, isn't it, a man ghosting himself like that?"

"Yes; but what did Harper mean by saying he heard Mrs. Burgess singing in the cabin that night?"

"Ah, that's another section of the log, recorded in a different way."

Moreton Fitch made a sign to the little Japanese, and told him to get a package out of his car. He returned in a moment and laid it at our feet on the floor.

"Dayrell was very proud of his wife's voice," said Fitch as he took the covers off the package. "Just before he was taken ill he conceived the idea of getting some records made of her songs to take with him on board ship. The gramophone was found amongst the old clothes. The usual sentimental stuff, you know. Like to hear it? She had rather a fine voice."

He turned a handle and, floating out into the stillness of the California night, we heard the full rich voice of a dead woman:

"Just a song at twilight, when the lights are low
And the flickering shadows softly come and go."

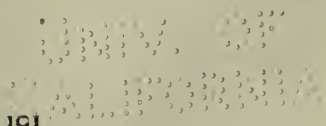
At the end of the stanza a deep bass voice broke in with, "Encore! Encore!"

Then Fitch stopped it.

When we were in the car on our way home, I asked if there were any clue to the fate of the Japanese cook in the last sentence of the log of the *Evening Star*.

"I didn't want to bring it up before his brother," said Knight; "they are a sensitive folk; but the last sentence was to the effect that the *Evening Star* had now been claimed by the spirit of Captain Dayrell, and that the writer respectfully begged to commit hara kari."

Our road turned inland here, and I looked back toward the fishing village. The night was falling, but the sea was lilac-coloured with the afterglow. I could see the hut and the little bird-house, black against the water. On a sand-dune just beyond them the fisherman Kato and his wife were sitting on their heels and still watching us. They must have been nearly a mile away by this time; but in that clear air they were carved out sharp and black as minute ebony images against the fading light of the Pacific.



THE CREATIVE IMPULSE

IV

THE CREATIVE IMPULSE

Captain Julius Vandermeer had undoubtedly made a pile of money. A Dutch sea-captain, who was the chief owner of his vessel during the first two years of the war, was a lucky dog. A couple of voyages might bring him more than he could hope to make in half a century of peace. If he were lucky enough to make forty or fifty successful voyages across the Atlantic, he could do exactly what Captain Vandermeer had done —retire from the sea, invest his money, look for a handsome young wife, and expect the remainder of his years to mellow around him like an orchard, dropping all the most pleasant fruits of life at his feet.

Best of all, despite the grey streaks in his bushy red beard, he was only half-way through the forties, and he knew how to enjoy himself.

He sat on the veranda of his broad white bungalow under the foothills of the Sierra Madre, puffing at his big meerschaum pipe, and explaining things to the lady whom he had just married.

"Long ago I settled it in my mind, Mimika," he said, "if ever I came to be rich there should only be one country in the world for me, and that should be Southern California. Look at it!"

He waved the stem of his pipe at the broad slopes below. As far as the eye could see, from the petals that dropped over the dainty little electric car before the porch to the distant horizon, they were one gorgeous pattern of fruit trees in blossom. Masses of white and pink bloom surged like foam against the veranda, and the soft wind blowing across that odorous wilderness was like the whisper of wings at sunset in Eden. Behind the windows of the dining-room a Chinese man-servant glided to and fro like a blue shadow.

"Man lives by contrast, Mimika," Vandermeer continued. "For a quarter of a century salt water was all my world. Now I have chosen seas of peach blossom, and no danger of shipwreck, heh? Ah, but it smells fine, Mimika, fine! When I saw my fortune coming I asked a friend in New York what was the place out of all the world where a man might live most happily, most healthily, in the most beautiful climate, to the age of ninety, or even to the age of a hundred, enjoying himself also, and what

do you think he said? He told me a little story. He said, 'Yesterday I was at a funeral in Boston. The minister asked if anyone present would like to say a few words about the deceased. There was a silence. At last a man rose up and said, "I am a stranger here, and I'm sorry to say I never knew the deceased, but I should like to say a few words about Southern California."' At once I knew that my friend was right. I remembered San Diego when I was a boy, and the roses tumbling at my feet on Christmas Day. I remembered the women, Mimika, and the cantaloup melons, cut in halves, with the ice melting in their lovely yellow hearts; and as soon as the money was in the bank I took the Sunset Limited to the City of the Angels, Los Angeles—what a name, heh? In three weeks I had found my ranch, with its beautiful bungalow, waiting like a palace for its queen. In six months I had found the queen Mimika, heh?"

Mimika rose from her rocking-chair, remarking, "Now listen, Julius." This did not mean that she had anything of great importance to say. But she had a trick, which Vandermeer found fascinating, of prefacing most of her remarks with the command to listen. "Listen, Julius. You won't come down with me to meet Roy?" she said.

"No, Mimika, no. The little sister will have much to tell her brother when she sees him for the first time after—how long has he been in Europe, two years?—and she will have to tell him all about her honeymoon, heh?"

He pinched her ear playfully as she stooped to kiss him.

"I guess Roy will open his eyes when he sees my electric," she said.

She went down to the car in a skipping walk, while Captain Vandermeer surveyed her with the eye of one who has found a prize. She was wearing a Panama hat, a sweater of emerald green, and a very short yellow skirt that fluttered round her yellow silk stockings like the petals of a California poppy. This was not altogether out of keeping with the blaze of the landscape, but her high-heeled white shoes prevented her from walking gracefully, and this was really a pity, for she could dance like a wave of the sea if she chose. Sadder still, her nose was white with powder, and her lips looked as if she had been eating damson jam. This also was a pity, because in its natural state her face was pretty as a wild flower.

Captain Vandermeer sat blowing rings of blue smoke between the roses for a minute or two longer. Then he entered the bungalow and

went to a room at the back of the house which he had reserved as his own den. It was a very bare room at present, chiefly furnished by the neat little safe which he now proceeded to unlock.

He drew out a bundle of papers, and he examined them with loving care. There were American railroad bonds to the value of fifty thousand dollars; some Liberty Loan bonds to the value of fifty thousand more; twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of Anglo-French bonds; and the same amount of the City of Paris, risky enough if the Germans were going to break through, but he did not think they were, and they yielded over ten per cent. It was very wonderful, he thought, and he replaced them like a man saying good-night to his child.

Then he drew out a chamois-leather bag and poured the glittering contents into his left palm. He was a very wise man in his generation.

"You never know," he muttered, "you never know what will happen in these days to bonds. These are, perhaps, the best investment of all. These are the reserves of my little army. It was a good idea to keep them. Besides, you can put them in your pocket, and go where you wish at a moment's notice. It is not possible always to get money at once for bonds."

His face glowed with satisfaction as he replaced the bag in the safe and locked it.

On the way up to the ranch from the railway station Mimika had been chattering hard to her brother; but he noticed certain changes in her appearance with a feeling akin to remorse. He was not at all sure that she was really happy, despite her apparent enthusiasm over what she called the "generosity" of Julius. He wished that his mother had delayed things till he had returned from Europe, and he could not help wondering how far his failure to send home more than two-thirds of his own scanty income as a newspaper correspondent had contributed to the haste of this marriage. He had not been able to learn much about it. His mother was a vague widow, who—like so many widows—regarded marriage with a kind of ghostly detachment and a more than maidenly innocence. She was devoted to Mimika, but quite ready, he feared, to sacrifice Mimika to himself. Roy himself had not had too easy a time in the last few years. He was one of those not uncommon Americans who combine an extraordinary knowledge of the world with the unworldliness—and sometimes the gullibility—of an Eastern sage. He knew more about the cathedrals of England than

almost any Englishman; more about the châteaux of France than most Frenchmen. He could have dictated an encyclopædia of useful knowledge about Italy and Egypt. He had been a war correspondent in four quarters of the globe, and he had acquired a sense of the larger movements in politics that gave his opinions an unusual interest. He flew over the big guns of international affairs like a man in an aeroplane, and though his European hearers might not always like his signals they usually felt that he was looking beyond their horizon. His ambition, however, was to do creative work, and he had not yet succeeded. He marvelled how some other men without expending a tithe of his energy had produced a shelf of books while he was still taking his notes. He never seemed to have the time for creation, and whenever he approached any original work he gravitated toward the method of the newspaper correspondent. He wondered sometimes whether this was due to a lack of what he called "the creative impulse." One of the things to which he had been looking forward on this visit was the opportunity that it would give him of obtaining some first-hand material from a real live sea-captain. Yet he was not sure whether he would ever be able to transmute it into an original book.

His boyish smile was in somewhat pathetic contrast with his gold-spectacled and curiously dreamy, yet over-strained eyes, which sometimes gave his face in repose the expression of a youthful Buddha. His frequent abrupt changes between a violently active and an almost completely sedentary life had not been good for him physically, and he was subject to fits of depression, relieved by fits of extreme optimism.

If only Mimika were happy he was going to feel very optimistic about the material that Vandermeer could give him for the book he was contemplating. Indeed, already he could not help sharing a little in her enthusiasm over her electric.

"And listen, Roy : we've got a marble swimming-pool in the garden, all surrounded with heliotropes," she concluded, almost breathless, as they rolled up the long aisle of palms and pepper trees.

"Is that so?" said Roy. "And you love him, Mimika?"

"He's a dear," said Mimika. "And, of course——" She was going to add that Captain Vandermeer would do a great deal for Roy, but she had misgivings, and checked herself.

She had almost broached the subject to her lord this morning, and she had checked herself

then, too, feeling instinctively that Vandermeer had grown rich too recently for him to help anyone but himself just at present.

The introduction of brother to husband went off very well indeed. Vandermeer was so hearty, and he held Roy's hand so affectionately, that Mimika ventured to approach the subject again when they were getting ready for dinner.

"And listen, Julius: you'll be able to help Roy just a little, too, won't you?" she said, putting her hands up to her hair before the mirror in her bedroom.

"What do you mean, Mimika, by 'help'?" Vandermeer's voice rolled in a very unsatisfactory way from the adjoining room.

"Oh, of course, there's only one kind of help Roy would accept," she replied hastily. "He's going to write something about the sea, and he thinks you might give him some hints."

"Why, certainly, Mimika. They say there's a book in every man's life." The voice was thoroughly hearty again now. "In mine, I should say there would be a hundred books. I will tell him some splendid things."

Even more jovial was the mood of Julius Vandermeer that evening after dinner, and he

expanded his rosy views of the future to his brother-in-law over their cigars and a steaming rum punch, flavoured with lemon, which was his own invention for coping with the cold of a California night. He called it his "internal smudge-pot."

"And now, Roy," he said at last, "I hope your own affairs go well. It is a great thing, the gift of expression. I wish I had it. Ah, what books I could write! The things I have seen, things you will never find in print!"

"That's precisely what I want to discuss with you, Julius. I have just signed a contract with the Copley-Willard Publishing Company to write them a serial dealing with the heroism of the merchant marine in war-time. I don't mind confessing that I told them a little about yourself—said you had no end of cracker-jack material I could use. The result was the best contract I've yet made with any publisher, so I owe that to you. The Star News Company was very well satisfied with my record as a correspondent, but I bungled the contract with them. If I can put this thing through it means that I shan't be a poor relation much longer. Now, if you can only give me a good subject, and put me wise on the seamanship, and help me to get the local colour, the rest will be as easy

as falling off a log. You must have had a good many experiences, for instance, with the submarines when you were crossing the Atlantic twice a week."

"Experiences? Why, yes, many experiences, but my good fortune comes—well, from my good fortune. I am like the happy nation. I have not had much history for these two years. But I have seen things—oh, yes, I have seen things—that were like what you call clues—clues to many strange tales."

"That's precisely what I want, Julius—a rattling good clue."

"Well, now let me think. There were some interesting things about those big merchant submarines which the Germans sent at one time across the Atlantic."

"Like the *Deutschland*, you mean?"

"Yes, and there were others never mentioned in the newspapers. One or two of them disappeared. Perhaps the British destroyed them. Nobody knows. But it was reported that one of them was carrying a million dollars' worth of diamonds to the United States. Think of that, Roy! A submarine full of diamonds! Doesn't that kindle your imagination?"

"Gee! I should say it would!" remarked Mimika, putting down the highly coloured

magazine in which she had been studying the latest New York fashions.

"Depends what happened to it," said Roy.

"Come, then, I will tell you a little story," said Vandermeer, "but you must not mention my name about this one. How did I come to know it? Ah, perhaps by some strange accident I met the only man who could tell the truth about it. Perhaps I was able to do him some small service. In any case, that is a different matter. This story must be your own, Roy. It shall come from what you call your creative impulse."

Mimika plumped down on a cushion at her lord's feet to listen. He patted her shoulder affectionately with his big left paw, which showed up in a somewhat startling contrast, with its rough skin and long red hairs, against that smooth whiteness. With his right hand he filled himself the third glass of rum punch which he had taken that evening. He smacked his lips between two sips.

"Help yourself, Roy," he said, "and take another cigar. Yes, I will tell you. Take a sip, Mimika. That is good, heh? Now I shall need no more sugar.

"Well, Roy, just imagine. This big merchant-submarine leaves Hamburg loaded with

diamonds! A million dollars' worth of diamonds, all going to the United States, because it is necessary that Germany shall pay some of her bills. There is a crew of only twenty men, because they need them for the U-boats. All of these men are sulky, rebellious. They have been forced to do this work against their will. They were happy on their ships in the Kiel Canal, except that there is always the chance of being picked for submarine duty. When they are lined up for that, ah, it is like waiting to be named for the guillotine in the Reign of Terror! They have courage, but their hands shake, their lips are blue, and their hearts are sick. It is the death-sentence. Either this week, or the next, or the next, they will be missing. Certainly in eight weeks their places must be filled again; they are just fishes' food. Picture, then, first, the choosing of these men. There is your first chapter, heh?

"Now for the second. You must picture the captain. He is the most rebellious of all, for his life has been spared longer than most, but his life on the submarine is a living death. He is a good sailor, yes, in any surface vessel; but, in the first place, the submarine makes him sick at the stomach, the smells, the bad air, the joggle, joggle of the engine, the lights turned

down to save the batteries. All that depresses him, and he has always the thought that if one leetle thing goes wrong he will die like a man buried alive in a big steel coffin with nineteen others, all fighting for breath. It is a nightmare—the only nightmare that ever frightened him."

Captain Vandermeer certainly had a vivid imagination, or else his own creative impulse, aided by frequent draughts of rum punch, was carrying him away, for his bulging blue eyes looked as if they would burst out of their canary-lashed lids.

"Moreover, this captain has been in a fighting submarine that shocked his nerves. He has grown used to scenes of death. He has come to the surface and seen many scores of men and women drowning, and he has watched them till he minds it no more than drowning flies. But twice he has found himself entangled in a steel net and escaped by a miracle. That is not so pleasant. When it was decided to send him to the United States on a merchant-submarine, what was his first thought? What would be yours, Roy, in that position?"

"A bedroom and bath at the Hotel Astor," replied Roy promptly.

"You follow the clue very well, my boy.

You have a clever brother, Mimika. The first thought of the captain is this: If I can get safely through the ring of the enemy the rest of the voyage will not be so bad. I shall make most of it on the surface and I shall have a breathing spell in a great city outside the war. That will make the second chapter, heh? Now, what is his next thought, Mimika?"

"Why, listen. If I once got to New York I should want to stay there," replied Mimika, helping herself to a large piece of candy.

"Ah, what a clever sister you have, my dear Roy!" said Vandermeer, and both his red-streaked paws descended approvingly on Mimika's white shoulders. "How beautifully we compose this tale together, heh? But he has not yet reached America, and he has a submarine full of diamonds on his hands, also a crew of twenty men, also his orders as an officer in the German Navy.

"Well, let us suppose he has come safely through the ring of the enemy, after several nightmares. He runs on the surface almost always now, and he is losing his bad dreams for a time.

"One night he is on deck looking at the stars and thinking, who knows what thoughts, when the youngest engineer, a nice little fellow, a

Bavarian, you might say, with flaxen hair and blue eyes, just as pretty as a girl, comes up to him. His face is as white and smooth as Mimika's shoulders, but there is no powder on it, heh? And his blue eyes are frightened.

"'Captain,' he says, 'I want to warn you. There is a plot among the men to kill you.'

"'To kill me,' the captain says. 'Why should they wish to kill me, Otto?'

"'They've gone crazy about the diamonds. They say they have had enough of this life and they will never go back to Germany. They mean to take the diamonds and sell them a few at a time in America. Then they will live like princes. They think I'm joining them.'

"'Is there nobody but yourself on my side?' says the captain.

"'Nobody now,' says Otto.

"'Very well, thank you, my boy. I will see that you are rewarded for this. When are they going to do it!'

"'When we are submerged, and nearing the three-mile limit.'

"'Thank you, Otto,' says the captain again.

"And there's your third chapter, and your fourth, too, Roy—a dramatic situation, heh?"

Roy appeared to think so, and on the

strength of it he filled Vandermeer's glass again. He was anxious to help the creative impulse.

"What follows?" continued Vandermeer. "In your tales to-day you must have psychology. The captain is a clever man. What would you do in that position, Roy? He cannot fight them all. I will tell you what he does. He is a diplomatist. He shapes his policy, standing there on the deck of the submarine, all alone, under the stars.

"The next evening he orders rum all round, just like this—good rum, from his own little cask, which he keeps for the sake of his stomach. It is a beautiful evening, a sea like oil, and the setting sun makes a road of gold to the shores of America. They are approaching the happy land. The men themselves are more cheerful, and, like a good diplomatist, he seizes the cheerful moment. Not only does he give them rum, but he gives them cigars, also from his private box—expensive cigars, just like these.

"'I have a proposition to make,' he says. 'We are all sick of the war, and I myself am more sick of it than anybody.'

"They all stare at him, wondering what he will say next; and the little Bavarian opens his blue eyes like a girl and stares more than any of

them. He thinks perhaps the end of the world will come now.

"'There is nobody here,' says the captain, 'that wishes to return. Why should we return? There is a million dollars in diamonds aboard, enough to make every one of us rich. We are going to the great Republic. Good! We will share equally. Every one of us shall have the same amount. I myself, although I am your captain, will take no more than Otto. That will be more than fifty thousand dollars for each.'

"Immediately the last cloud melts away like magic from the crew. There is nothing but smiles all round him, smiles and the smell of rum and good cigars, just like these. They are all good comrades together, shaking hands, except the little Bavarian. He is sitting back behind the gyroscopic compass watching the captain with big eyes and a solemn face, like the infant Saint John.

"And why should they not all be satisfied, except the captain, who is, perhaps, only pretending to be satisfied? They lose only a twentieth part of their money by including him. On the other hand, the captain loses a million dollars, to which these robbers had no more right than you, Roy. It would be

as if you should dip your hand in my pocket, heh?"

"I guess the little Bavarian was sorry he spoke," said Roy, and he filled Vandermeer's glass again.

"The little Bavarian was a child, an innocent. He had no will to power, heh? He comes again to the captain late that night on deck, under the stars. His face looks thin and miserable. 'Captain,' he says, 'did you mean your words to those men?'

"'What else could I say, Otto, to save the diamonds and my life, and perhaps yours? You do not understand diplomacy, Otto.'

"The face of the little Bavarian grows brighter. 'Forgive me, my captain,' he says, 'but I had begun to doubt even you for a moment. I was thinking of the Fatherland.'

"Now, the captain was much obliged to Otto. His policy was complete in his mind for fooling those robbers, and he would have been glad to save this little Bavarian who had warned him. But he begins to see an obstacle. He thinks he will put this little fellow to the trial.

"'Come now, Otto,' he says, 'it is very well to think of the Fatherland if you and I could save her. But do you think a few hundred shining pebbles will make any odds? These

robbers shall not have them. But, supposing we share them, there is nobody in the Fatherland that would be any poorer. They belong to the State, Otto, and if they should be shared with every one in Germany not one man would be a pfennig the better. But see what a difference this would make to you and me! We are in a state of necessity, Otto; and above that state there is no power, as the Chancellor told the Reichstag. Very well, in this case I quote Louis the Fourteenth: "*l'État c'est Moi!*" Have I the might to do it, Otto? Very well, then, according to the spokesman of the Fatherland I have also the right.'

"'I do not understand you, my captain,' says this little blue-eyed baby, 'but I know well that you mean to do right.'

"'You shall have not fifty, but a hundred thousand dollars' worth for your share, Otto, because you have been faithful,' says the captain; 'but you must not think too many beautiful thoughts till we are safe on shore. I have arranged everything in my mind. Go down and sleep.'

"'For God's sake, captain,' cries this funny little fellow, dropping on his knees, 'tell me what you mean to do.' And the tears begin to roll down his face.

"'It is not safe to trust you yet, Otto. You might talk in your sleep,' says the captain. 'Do as I bid you. We shall see what we shall see.'

"Very well, Roy, there is at least four chapters to be made from that, heh?

"We come now to the crisis. The submarine is nearing the end of her voyage. They begin to see ships, and they submerge. The captain has told them, instead of making for New York he is heading for the coast of Maine, where there will be better opportunities of destroying the submarine and landing unobserved. It is about six o'clock in the evening when he takes a look through the periscope. They are within a short distance of the mainland, but they must lie on the bottom till midnight, when it will be safer to go ashore. They are all very happy. Once more he gives them rum all round, just like this, and advises them to sleep, for they will get no sleep after midnight. They sleep very soundly, all except the little Bavarian and the captain. Why? Because the captain keeps the medicine chest as well as the diamonds. If he had something stronger in his medicine chest it would have saved him much trouble and danger.

"While they sleep the captain takes out the diamonds from the strong box and puts them in

his inside pockets. Then he examines the batteries. He is an expert engineer. He can make the batteries work when every one else thinks they are dead. Also, he can make them die, so that even he can never make them work again. He examines other parts of the machinery, those which enable the submarine to rise to the surface. He will not allow the little Bavarian to watch what he is doing. Then he puts on his life-belt, and looks at the men snoring in their hammocks and on the floor. Some of them are stirring in their sleep. There is no time to lose, or he may be interrupted. At last he is ready. The submarine will never rise to the surface again, and the sea will never betray the secret. There is only one way for himself to get out, and it is not a pleasant way. But in his nightmares he has often rehearsed it, and he has always made sure that it could be done before he went to sea. There must always be a way out for one man at least, if not for more. '*L'État c'est Moi!*'

"He beckons to the little Bavarian. 'I have all the diamonds in my pocket,' he says. 'The time is come for you to help me, Otto.'

"Now, Roy, you know what the conning-tower of a submarine is like inside. It is like a round chimney, with a lid at the top to keep

out the water when you are submerged. You can climb up into this conning-tower and steer the ship from it if you wish. There is also another lid at the bottom of the conning-tower, which you can close as well. Then, if you wish, you can flood your chimney with water.

"Now, if a submarine cannot rise to the surface it is possible for a man to climb into this conning-tower. Another man, then, closes the lid below, and floods the tower very slowly. When the water reaches the head of the man in the tower there is just enough pressure for him to push open the lid at the top and shoot up to the surface. The lid at the top can then be closed from the interior of the submarine. The lower lid can be opened slowly, and the water from the tower pours out into the hull. Then, perhaps, another man can climb up into the tower, and the process can be repeated. There is only room for one man at a time.

"The captain tells the little Bavarian that he is going to do this.

"'But, my captain, it is very dangerous. You may be drowned. It is not certain that you can open it. The pressure may be too great above.'

"'It is for the Fatherland, Otto,' says the captain, and the little Bavarian salutes, stand-

ing at attention, just like a pretty little wax doll.

"'When the men awake you will be able to follow by the same road,' says the captain, and he climbs up into the conning-tower.

"The lower lid is closed. The water begins to creep up around the captain's knees in the darkness. He is horribly frightened. He has a crowbar in his hand to help him open the upper lid quickly, but he still thinks perhaps it will not open. When the water has reached his waist he begins to push at the upper lid, but it cannot move yet. The weight of the whole sea above is pressing it down. He knows it cannot move, but he cannot help pushing at it till the sweat breaks out on him, though the water is like ice. It is worse than he expected, worse than any of his nightmares. The water reaches to his neck. He struggles with all his strength, and still the lid will not move. A prayer comes to his lips. The cold water creeps—creeps over his chin. There are only three inches now between his face and the lid. He holds his head back to keep his nostrils above the water, fighting, fighting always to open the lid. Then the water covers his face. The conning-tower is full. He holds his breath, gives one last push, and feels the lid opening, opening softly, like the big steel door

of a safe in a bank. His crowbar is wedged under the lid, between the hinges, just as he wished. In four seconds he is shooting up, up, with his chest bursting, like a diver that has seen a shark, to the surface.

"For a minute he floats there, in the darkness, under the stars. Then, perhaps the struggle has been greater even than he knew, he faints. It is fortunate that his lifebelt is a good one, for when he recovers he has floated perhaps a long time. He is very cold. He takes a drink of rum from his flask, and gets his bearings. He is two miles from the coast. Yes, but he is a clever man. There is one of those little islands, covered with pine trees, just a hundred and fifty yards away. There is also a little wooden house on the island and a little landing stage, with a dinghy hauled up on the shore.

"The owner of the boat is careful. He has taken his oars to bed with him. But the captain is a clever man. It is a beautiful night. He has plenty of time, and he can paddle with one of the loose boards in the bottom of the dinghy."

"But listen! What became of the little Bavarian?" said Mimika.

"Well, I was not there to see," said Captain Vandermeer, lighting a cigar. "But when

the men awoke they must all have tried to get out by the same way."

"And they couldn't?" asked Roy. He was watching Vandermeer with a very curious expression, almost as if he were examining an eye-witness.

"The captain was an expert engineer, ah, a magnificent engineer, as I told you, Roy, and there was a little crowbar wedged under what we have been calling the lid of the conning-tower."

"Good God, what an idea! You mean they couldn't close the upper lid again?"

"They might think they had closed it." Vandermeer gave a deep guttural chuckle. "Then they would open the lower lid, heh?"

"And then?"

"Why, then the sea would come running into the hull, and they would be drowned."

"Oh, but not the poor little Bavarian!" said Mimika.

"'*L'État c'est Moi*,'" said Vandermeer with a smile.

Roy was looking at him still, with the same pensive expression as of a youthful Buddha.

"I suppose he had no difficulty in getting rid of the diamonds!" he said.

"Probably not," said Vandermeer. "Per-

haps he would keep a few as a little reserve—a kind of Landsturm. But he would buy Liberty Bonds, heh?"

"And you mean to say that a man like that is going about in the United States now?" said Mimika.

Vandermeer chuckled again.

"Who knows?" he said. "Perhaps he has come to Southern California. Perhaps he has bought a nice little ranch—a fruit ranch—just like this, heh? where he shall live a happy and healthy life to the age of a hundred. And now, Mimika, it is getting time for little girls to go to bed."

About two o'clock in the morning Mimika was awakened by a guttural, choking cry from her husband. She was so startled that she slipped out of bed and stood staring at him. The moon was flooding the room almost like a searchlight, and Captain Vandermeer lay in the full stream of it. While she watched him he rose slowly to a sitting posture, with his eyes still shut and his hands clenched above his face. He began muttering to himself, in a low voice at first, and then so loudly that it echoed through the house, and the words sounded more like German than Dutch. Then he began fighting

for breath like a man in a nightmare. He tore his pyjama jacket open over the great red hairy chest.

"Otto," he shouted at the top of his voice, "Otto!" then with a huge sigh he sank back on the pillows, whispering "I have opened it."

There was a tap on the door. Mimika snatched up the first garment she could lay her hands on (it happened to be Vandermeer's dressing-gown), wrapped it round her, glided across the room, and opened the door. Her brother stood there, also in his dressing-gown, and barefooted. Their eyes met, without a word. He took her hand, led her outside and closed the door quietly behind them.

"You heard him, Roy?" she whispered.

"Come downstairs," he said, "I want to ask you some questions about this."

They went down to the den at the back of the house and stood there looking at each other's faces, looking the question that neither was able to put into words.

"He told us a tale to-night," said Roy at last.

"Yes," said Mimika faintly.

"Do you know what he was calling out in his nightmare?"

"It sounded like German," she said.

"Yes, it was German, and it gave me a good deal more local colour than I expected. That was a true story all right, Mimika."

"You mean that he——"

"Yes."

"Oh, but Roy!"

"That's his dressing-gown you're wearing, isn't it?"

"Yes, I picked it up in a hurry."

"There's been too much hurry about everything, I'm afraid. Why the devil did I go to Europe? Here, Mimika, take off that thing and put mine on. I don't like to see you in it. It doesn't suit you, little sister."

She obeyed him, with a small white, frightened face, but it was not the white of powder now. Roy thrust his hand into the pocket of Vandermeer's dressing-gown. Something jingled. He pulled out a bunch of keys.

"Vandermeer told me I was good at following up a clue. I'm going to follow one now, Mimika," he said. "This is the key of the safe."

He opened the safe, looked hastily at the bundles of papers, and then pulled out the chamois-leather bag.

"Look here, Mimika," he said, and poured

a glittering river of diamonds, several hundreds of them, on to the table. The moonlight played over them with an uncanny brilliance.

"That's his Landsturm," said Roy, "and that settles it."

He took Mimika's hand, and she made no protest and he withdrew the wedding ring from her finger, and added it to the glittering heap on the table.

There was a heavy footstep in the room above. Vandermeer was awake and moving about upstairs. The boards creaked over their heads, then they heard his bedroom door open and the heavy footsteps began to descend the stairs.

Mimika shrank behind her brother, and both stood motionless, waiting. They could hear the heavy breathing of Vandermeer, the breathing of a man roused from a dyspeptic sleep. He came down with an intolerable precision, making the twelve steps of that short descent seem almost interminable. At every step Mimika felt the edges of her heart freezing. At last he reached the foot of the stairs, and with three more shuffling steps, as of a gigantic ape, the big hairy bulk of Vandermeer stood in the doorway facing them across the glittering mound of gems. The sharp searchlight of the moon made

his face corpse-like, showing up the puffy blue pouches under his eyes, and picking out the coarse red hairs of his bushy beard like strands of copper wire. His eyes protruded and his mouth opened twice without any sound but the soft smacking sound of his tongue as he tried to moisten his lips.

"What are you doing here?" he said at last.

"Looking at your Landsturm," said Roy with all the deadly calm of his nation.

Vandermeer swayed a little on his feet like a drunken man. Then he moved forward to the table and blinked at the diamonds and the gold ring crowning them.

"I don't understand," he said at last.

"You'd better get dressed, Mimika," said Roy. "Our train goes at a quarter after four." He led her to the door, watched her pathetic little figure mounting the stairs, and turned to Vandermeer again.

Mimika never knew what passed between the two men. When she came out of her room ten minutes later Roy was waiting, fully dressed, at the foot of the stairs, with his suit-case in his hand. She heard the heavy breathing of Vandermeer in his den; and, out of the corner of her eye, as they passed the door she saw that glowing

mass on the table as if a fragment of the moon had been dropped there.

They walked down the avenue of palms in silence. In the waiting-room at the station neither of them spoke till they heard the long hoot of the approaching train and the clangour of the bell on the transcontinental locomotive.

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Six months later Mimika and her mother were sitting up for Roy in their fourth-floor flat near the offices of the Copley-Willard Publishing Company in Philadelphia.

"I wish he didn't have to keep these late hours," said her mother. "I thought that everything was turning out for the best when you were married to Julius. I have never been able to understand why you got your divorce so quickly. It was all kept so quiet, and you and Roy are so mysterious about it. You've never even told me the real grounds, I'm sure."

"Yes, I did. It was desertion," said Mimika grimly.

"Does nobody know what became of him? It seems so strange that he should have gone away and left all the furniture in that house. He had some lovely things, too. I think you might at least have claimed the furniture."

"Please, Mother, don't talk about that or we

shall be making the same mistake again. I expect he's shaved his beard by now."

"Mimika, child, what do you mean? Are you crazy?"

"I think we were both crazy, Mother, a year ago."

"Well, I thought it was all for your happiness, my pet," said her mother, dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief. "I'm afraid it will be a long time before you can marry this other young man that Roy likes so much. He isn't earning half as good a salary as Roy."

"I don't know that I'm going to marry anyone, Mother. But, listen! I feel like marrying the first good American that comes to me with a piece of the original *Mayflower* in his buttonhole."

And this time her mother really listened.

MAROONED

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MAROONED

1

Rachel Hepburn believed that her first lover had been drawn to her—when she was twenty-two years old—by the way in which she played the violin. She played it remarkably well; and she was also exceedingly pretty, in a frank, open-air fashion. Until she was seventeen she had lived on the mountainous coast of Cumberland, where she rode astride and swam half a mile every morning before breakfast. Her family nicknamed her "The Shetland Pony," and that was her picture to the life when she came in from her swim with her face glowing and her dark eyes like mountain pools and the thick mane of hair blowing about her broad forehead. Her sturdy build helped the picture at the time; but she had shot up in height since then, and the phrase was no longer applicable. At twenty-four she became beautiful and her music began to show traces of genius. Unfortunately, she

had the additional attraction of ten thousand pounds a year in her own right, and when the marriage settlement was discussed she proposed to share the money with her three younger sisters.

The young man behaved very badly. She told him—very quietly—that this was the result of her own folly, for, in her family hitherto, marriages had always been "arranged." He replied—for he was an intellectual young man who understood women and read the most advanced novelists—that she was one of those who were ruining England with their feudal ideas. Then they parted, the young man cursing under his breath, and Rachel lilting the ballad to which she had hitherto attributed her good fortune:

"Maxwellton braes are bonnie,
Where early fa's the dew,
And it's there that Annie Laurie
Gied me her promise true,
Gied me her promise true,
Which ne'er forgot shall be,
And for bonnie Annie Laurie
I'd lay me doon and dee."

He had quoted it so often in his letters, that she was justified, perhaps, in thinking that it had influenced her fate. "You know, darling, that those words were supposed to tell the love of a soldier who died in Flanders fighting for

England more than a hundred years ago, and when you sing them I feel that I, too——" So it was the obvious thing to toss at him as she went through the door holding her head up almost as gallantly as a soldier. But he didn't seem to mind, and the parting was final.

Rachel apparently minded very much indeed, but she kept it to herself and her violin till on a certain day she decided that she must escape from all her old surroundings and forget.

Her guardian was the only person she consulted, and he made no criticism of her scheme of travel so far as she divulged it. She had been brought up to complete freedom while her parents were alive, and in the six years since her affairs had been entrusted to him she had proved that she was capable of taking care of herself. He was wise or unwise enough not to let her know that he understood her trouble. But he tried to express a certain sympathy in his gruff parting words, "London is a grimy cavern."

"Yes, and the people are grimy, too," she replied, waving her hand to him as she went out into the fog. She looked brighter than she had looked for months past. His last impression of her was that she looked as roses would look if

they could wear furs and carry stars in their eyes.

She had been studying the sailings of the ocean steamers for some time, but it was not her intention to follow the travelled routes more than was necessary. Her brain was busy with a new music, the music of the names in a hundred tales that she had read. The Golden Gate and Rio Grande called to her like chords in a Beethoven symphony. Yokohama and Singapore stirred her like Rossini. But it was the folk-song of travel that she wanted, something wilder and sweeter even than Tahiti, some fortunate Eden island in the South Seas.

Egypt and Ceylon were only incidents on her way. They only set the fever burning a little more restlessly in her veins; and her first moment of content was when the little yacht of thirty tons, which she chartered in San Diego, carried her out to the long heave of the Pacific, and turned southward on the endless trail of the Happy Islands.

This was a part of her scheme about which she had not consulted anyone at home, or she might have received some good advice about the choice of her ship. However, it was a sturdy little craft, with small but excellent cabins for herself and her maid. The captain and his wife

were apparently created for her special benefit, being very capable people, with the quality of effacing themselves. The crew of half a dozen Kanakas, in white shirts and red pareos, was picturesque and remote enough from all the associations of cities to satisfy her desire for isolation.

The maid was the only mistake, she thought, and she did not discover this until she had been a fortnight at sea. Her own maid had fallen ill at an early stage of her travels and had been sent home from Cairo. Rachel had engaged this new one in San Diego, chiefly because she thought it necessary to take somebody with her. When Marie Mendoza had come to do Rachel's hair at San Diego, she had a somewhat pathetic story to tell about a husband who had deserted her and forced her to work for a living. Rachel thought there might be two sides to the story when she discovered that the captain was playing the part of Samson to this Delilah. It was a vivid moonlight picture that she saw in the bows one night when she had come up on deck unexpectedly for a breath of air. Captain Ryan was an ardent wooer, and he did not see her. Marie Mendoza looked rather like a rainbow in the arms of a black-bearded gorilla, and Rachel retired discreetly, hoping that it was merely a temporary aberration.

She would have been more disturbed, probably, if she had heard a little of the conversation of this precious pair.

"I tell you, it's a cinch, Mickey. I never seen pearls like 'em. They're worth fifty thousand dollars in Tiffany's if they're worth a cent. She keeps 'em locked up in her steamer trunk, but I seen her take 'em out several times."

"Well, I've been hunting pearls up and down the South Seas for twenty years and never had a chance of making good like this."

But Rachel did not hear the conversation, or she might have been able to change the course of events considerably. She might even have taken an opportunity of explaining to Marie that the real pearls were in the bank at home, and that the necklace in her trunk was a clever imitation, useful when she wished to adorn herself without too much responsibility, and worth about thirty-five pounds in London or perhaps a little more than one hundred and fifty dollars in New York.

But Rachel knew nothing of the conspiracy; and so, on a certain morning when the *Seamew* dropped anchor off the coral island of her dreams, she went ashore without any misgivings. It was an island paradise, not recognised by any map

that she had seen, though Captain Ryan seemed to know all about it. Rachel had particularly wanted to hear the real music of the islanders, and Captain Ryan had assured her that she would find it at its best among the inhabitants of this island, who had been unspoiled by travellers, and yet were among the most gentle of the natives of the South Seas. Marie Mendoza pleaded a headache and remained on board; but the captain and his wife accompanied Rachel up the white beach, leaving the boat in charge of the Kanakas. A throng of brown-skinned, flower-wreathed islanders watched them timidly from under the first fringe of palm trees; but the captain knew how to ingratiate himself, and, after certain gifts had been proffered to the bolder natives, the rest came forward with their own gifts of flowers and long stems of yellow fruit. Two young goddesses seized Rachel by the hands and examined her clothes, while the rest danced round her like the figures from the Hymn to Pan in "Endymion."

Before the morning was over Rachel had made firm friends of these two maidens, who rejoiced in the names of Tinovao and Amaru; and when she signified to them that she wanted to swim in the lagoon, they danced off with her in an ecstasy of mirth at the European bathing

dress which she unrolled for their inspection, to their own favourite bathing beach, which was hidden from the landing-place by a little palm-tufted promontory.

It was more than an hour later when she returned, radiant, with her radiant companions. She was a superb swimmer, and she had lost all her troubles for the time in that rainbow-coloured revel. She thought of telling the captain that they would stay here for some days. She wanted to drink in the beauty of the island and make it her own; to swim in the lagoon and bask in the healing sun, to walk through the palms at dusk and listen to the songs of the islanders. But where was the captain? Surely, this was the landing-place. There were the foot-prints and the mark of the boat on the beach. Then she saw—with a quick contraction of the heart—not only that the boat was missing, but that there was no sign of the yacht. She stared at the vacant circle of the sea and could find no trace of it. There was no speck on that blazing sapphire.

2

HER last doubt as to whether she had been deliberately marooned was removed by the two girls. They pointed to a heap of her belongings that had been dumped on the beach, all in accordance with the best sea traditions, though it was due in this case to a sentimental spasm on the part of Marie Mendoza, who remembered the kindness of Rachel at San Diego.

The heap was a small one. But Rachel was glad to see that it included her violin-case.

She knew that her stay was like to be a long one. They had been looking for islands out of the way of ships; and she knew that it might even be some years before another sail appeared on that stainless horizon. The thieves would disappear, and they were not likely to talk. Her own movements had been so erratic that she doubted whether her friends could trace her. But she took it all very pluckily, so that the round-eyed Amaru and Tinovao were unable to guess the full meaning of her plight. They

came to the conclusion, and Rachel thought it best to encourage them in it, that she was voluntarily planning to live amongst them for a little while and that the yacht would of course return for her. They had heard of white people doing these strange things, and they were delighted at the prospect.

In a very short time they had lodged Rachel in a hut of palm leaves, with all the fruits of the island at her door. They carried up the small heap of her possessions, and she gave them each a little mirror from her dressing-bag, which lifted them into the seventh heaven. Thenceforward they were her devoted slaves. Rachel discovered, moreover, while they were turning over her possessions and examining her clothes, that her ignorance of their language was but a slight barrier to understanding. They communicated, it seemed, by a kind of wireless telegraphy, through that universal atmosphere of their sex. They helped her to do her hair, and as it fell over her shoulders they held it up to one another, admiring its weight and beauty. When it was dark there came a sound of singing from the beach; and they crowned her with fresh flowers and led her out like a bride to hear the songs of the islanders.

It was a night of music. In the moonlight,

on the moon-white sands, a few of the young islanders, garlanded like the sunburnt lovers of Theocritus, danced from time to time; but for the most part they were in a restful mood, attuned to the calm breathing of the sea. Their plaintive songs and choruses rose and fell as quietly as the night wind among the palms, and Rachel thought she had never heard or seen anything more exquisite. The beauty of the night was deepened a thousandfold by her new loneliness. The music plucked at her heart-strings. Beautiful shapes passed her that made her think of Keats:

> "Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
> To cease upon the midnight with no pain."

She murmured the lines to herself, and while her lips yet moved a young islander stood before her who might have posed as the model for Endymion. He was hardly darker than herself, and, to her surprise, he spoke to her in quaint broken English.

"Make us the music of your own country," was what she understood him to say, and Tinovao confirmed it by darting off to the hut and returning with the violin. Rachel took it, and, without any conscious choice of a melody, began to play and sing the air which had been pulsing just

below the level of her consciousness ever since she had left England:

"Like dew on the gowan lying
Is the fa' of her fairy feet,
And like winds in summer sighing,
Her voice is low and sweet,
Her voice is low and sweet,
And she's a' the world to me,
And for bonnie Annie Laurie
I'd lay me doon and dee."

The islanders listened as if spellbound, but she could not tell whether the music went home to any of them except the boy who lay at her feet with his eyes fixed on her face. When the last notes died away the crowd broke into applause with cries of "Malo! Malo!" But the boy lay still, looking at her, as a dog looks at his mistress. Then the moonlight glistened in his eyes, and she thought that she saw tears. She bent forward a little to make sure. He rose with a smile and lifted her hand to his face so that she might feel that his eyes were wet.

"Tears," he said, "and I only listen. But you—you make the music, and no tears are in your eyes." He looked into her face.

"No," she said, "there are no tears in my eyes." Then she continued hurriedly, as if speaking to herself (and perhaps only a musician

would have felt that the catch in her voice went a little deeper than tears): "That's one of the things you lose when you go in for music. It used to be so with me, too."

"I like your music," the boy went on. "My father—English sailor. My mother—learn speak English—from him. She teach me. My father only stay here little time. I never see English people before this."

Rachel looked at him with a quick realisation of what his words meant. The boy was at least eighteen years old.

"You remember no ship coming to this island?" she said.

"No. I never see my father. He only stay here little time. My mother think for long time he will come again. That is how she die, only a little time ago. Too much waiting. Make some more music. You have made my ears hungry."

But Rachel was facing the truth now, and she played and sang no more that night.

3

For a week or two Rachel spent much time alone, thinking hard, thinking things out as she had never done before. She did not quite understand her isolation till the first shock of the full discovery had passed. Then, one morning, sitting alone and gazing out over the spotless blue, she found herself accepting the plain fact, that this might indeed be for ever. She found herself weighing all the chances, all that she had lost, and all that yet remained to her. It dawned upon her for the first time that youth does not lightly surrender the fullness of its life at the first disillusionment. She knew now that she would have recovered from that first disastrous love affair. She knew now that she had always known it, and that her search had been only for some healing dittany, some herb of grace that would heal her wound more quickly. She faced it all—the loss of her birthright as a woman, the loss of the unknown lover. She saw herself growing old in this loneliness.

She weighed everything that was left to her, the freedom from all the complications of life,

the beauty of her prison, the years of youth and strength that might yet rejoice in the sun and the sea, and even find some companionship among these children of nature that rejoiced in them also. She compared them with the diseased monstrosities, the hideous bodies and brutal faces that swarmed in the grey cities of Europe. She saw nothing to alter her former opinion here. She was condemned at any rate to live among a folk that had walked out of an ode by John Keats. But always at the end she pictured herself growing old, with her own life unfulfilled.

Then, one day, a change came over her. She had lost all count of time in that island of lasting summer, but she must have been marooned for many months when it happened.

One afternoon, when she had been swimming with Tinovao and Amaru, the two girls had run up into the woods to get some fruit, leaving Rachel to bask on the beach alone. While they were away she thought she would take one more ride through the surf. She made her way out through the gap in the reef till she had reached the right distance. Then she rested, treading water, while she waited for the big comber that was to carry her back again.

It was her civilised intelligence, perhaps, that

betrayed her now, for she turned her back to the sea for a moment while she drank in the beauty of the feathery green palms and the delicate tresses of the ironwood that waved along the shore. She was roused from her dreams by the familiar muffled roar of the approaching breaker, and turned her head a few seconds too late to take the rush of it as it ought to have been taken. It was a giant this time, and for the first time in her life she knew the sensation of fear in the sea as the green crest crumbled high over her. In that instant, too, she caught a glimpse of a figure on the reef watching her. It was the figure of Rua, the boy who spoke English; and as the breaker crashed down with all its tons of water over her head she carried with her the impression that he was about to dive to her rescue. She was whirled helplessly, heels over head, downward and downward, then swept forward with the rushing whirlpools in the blackness below, like a reed in a subterranean river. She knew that if she could hold her breath long enough she would rise to the surface; but she had reckoned without the perils of the gap in the reef. Twice she was whirled and caught against a jagged piece of coral which would probably have killed her if it had struck her head. She took the warning, and held her arms in the

best way she could to ward off any head-blow. A lacerated body would not matter so much as the momentary stunning that might prevent her from keeping afloat when she rose. At last, when it seemed that she could hold her breath no longer, she shot with a wild gasp to the surface again.

She found that she was only half-way through the gap, not in mid-stream where she would have been comparatively safe, but in an eddy of boiling water, close to the reef and among the white fangs of coral that made it impossible to swim. All that she could do at the moment was to hold on to the coral and prevent herself from being lacerated against it. The sharp edges of the little shells, with which it was covered here, cut her hands as the water swirled her to and fro; but she held on and looked round for help.

Then she saw that she was not fated to receive help, but to give it; and, like lightning in a tropic night, the moment changed her world. She had no time to think it out now, for she saw the face of Rua swirling up towards her through the green water, and it looked like the face of a drowned man. His head and arms emerged and sank again, twice, before she caught him by the hand and drew him, with the strength of a woman fighting for life, to her side.

She was not sure whether he was alive or dead; but she saw that, in his hasty plunge to help her (a dive that no native would have taken at that place in ordinary circumstances), he had struck one of the coral jags. Blood was flowing from his head. They floated there helplessly for a minute, and she saw with fear that, all round them, the clear water went away over the white coral, tinted with little clouds of crimson. She waited for the next big wave, thinking that it would save or destroy them both. Happily, it had not broken when it reached them, and as they rose on the smooth back of it she held her companion by the hand, and struck out fiercely for a higher shelf of the reef. It had been out of her reach before, but the wave carried them both up to its level, and left them stranded there.

From this point the reef rose by easy stages, and with the aid of two more waves she was able to lug Rua to a point where there was no risk of their being washed away, though the clear water still swirled up about them, and went away clouded with red. She lay there for a moment exhausted, but as her strength came back to her the strange sensation that flashed through her when she had first come to the surface, returned with greater force. Much has been said and sung about the dawn of wonder on the primitive

mind. This was an even stranger dawn, the dawn of wonder on a daughter of the twentieth century. It seemed to her that she was looking at the world for the first time while she lay there panting and gazing out to sea with the blood staining the white coral and her hands gripping the slender brown hands of the half-drowned islander. It seemed that she had returned to her childhood and that she was looking at a primal world that she had forgotten. She saw now that he was breathing, and she knew instinctively that he would recover. The wave of joy that went through her had something primitive and fierce in it, like the joy of the wild creatures. She felt like an islander herself, and when the sea-birds hovered overhead she called to them in the island tongue and felt as if she had somehow drawn nearer to them. She looked at the sea with new eyes as if it were a fierce old playmate of her own, an old tiger that had forgotten to sheathe its claws when it buffeted its cubs. There was a glory in the savour of life like the taste of freedom to a caged bird. Only it was Europe now, and the world of houses that seemed her cage. The sea had never been so blue. The brine on her lips was like the sacramental wine of her new kinship with the world. . . .

Then, looking at Rua's face, as the life came back to it, a wave of compassion went through her. It showed in every contour that this boy also was a victim of her own race. He, too, was marooned, and more hopelessly than herself, for there must surely be a soul within him that could never even know what it had lost or what it hungered for, unless . . . unless, perhaps, she could help him out of the treasures of her own memory and give him glimpses of that imperial palace whence he came.

It was growing dark when they slipped into the water of the lagoon and swam slowly towards the beach. There she helped him to limp as far as his hut, neither of them speaking. He dropped on his knees as she turned to go, and laid his face at her feet. She stayed for a moment, looking at him, and half stooped to raise him, but she checked the impulse and left him abruptly.

At the edge of the wood she turned to look again, and he was there still in the same attitude. There was a dumb pathos in it that reminded her curiously of certain pictures of her lost world, the peasants in the "Angelus" of Millet, though this was a picture unmarred by the curse of Adam, the picture of a dumb brown youthful god, perfect in physical beauty, praying in

Paradise Garden to the star that trembled above the palms.

Many women (and most men) in their unguarded moments impute their own souls to other people, read their own thoughts in the eyes around them, pity their own tears in the eyes of "Geist." But Rua was praying to the best he knew.

4

THE prayer was a long one. It lasted, in various forms, for more than a year. At dawn she would wake and find offerings of fruit and flowers left at her door by her worshipper, and often she would talk with him on the beach, telling him of her own country, about which he daily thirsted to hear more, for the more he learned the more he seemed to share her own exile. Music, too, they shared, that universal language whose very spirituality is its chief peril, for it is emotion unattached to facts, and it may mean different things to different people, so that you may accompany the sacking of cities by the thunders of Wagner or dream that you see angels in an empty shrine. Sometimes in the evening Rua would steal like a shadow from the shadows around her hut, where he had been waiting to see her pass, and he would beg her to play the music of her own country. So she would sing, and he would stand in the doorway listening with every pulse of his body beating time, and one brown foot tapping in the dust.

One night she had been wandering with Tinovao and Amaru by the lagoon, in which the reflected stars burned so brightly that one might easily believe the island hung in mid-heaven. She looked at the sky for a long time, then, with her arms round the two girls, who understood her words only vaguely, she murmured to herself: "What does it matter? What does anything matter when one looks up there? And life is going . . . life and youth."

She said good night to her friends and laughingly plucked the red hibiscus flower from behind the shell-like ear of Tinovao as they parted. When she neared her door a shadow stole out of the woods and stood before her on the threshold. His eyes were shining like dark stars, the eyes of a fawn. "Music," he pleaded, "the music of your country."

Then he saw the red flower that she wore behind her ear, exactly as Tinovao had worn it. He stared at her, as Endymion must have stared at Diana among the poppies of Latmos, half frightened, half amazed. He dropped to his knees, as on that night when she had saved him. He pressed his face against her bare feet. They were cold and salt from the sea. But she stooped now and raised him.

"In my country, in our country," she said,

" love crowns a man. Happy is the love that does not bring the woman to the dust."

* * * * *

There followed a time when she was happy, or thought herself happy. It must have lasted for nearly seven years, the lifetime of that dancing ray of sunlight, the small son, whom she buried with her own hands under a palm tree. Then Rua deserted her. He had grown tired of her, and he took a new wife from among the islanders. When she first discovered his intention Rachel laughed mockingly at herself and said—also to herself, for she knew that she had somehow lost the power to make Rua understand her—" Have you been reading the advanced thinkers, Rua? "

Rua understood nothing, except that it was some kind of mockery, and, as her mockery was keeping him away from his new fancy, he leapt at her in fury, seized her by the throat, and beat her face against the ground. When she rose to her feet, with the blood running from her mouth, he saw that he had broken out two of her teeth. This effectively wrecked her beauty and convinced him, just as if he himself had been an advanced thinker, that love must be free to develop its own life, and that, in the interests of his own soul, he must get away as quickly as

possible. Thereafter he avoided her carefully, and she led a life of complete solitude, spending all her days by the little grave under the palm tree.

She lost all count of time. She only knew that the colours were fading from things, and that while she used to be able to watch the waves breaking into distant spray on the reef, she could only see now a blur of white from her place by the grave. She was growing old, she supposed, and it was very much like going to sleep, after all. The slow pulse of the sea, the voice of the eternal, was lulling her to rest.

* * * * *

When the schooner *Pearl*, with its party of irresponsible European globe-trotters, dropped anchor off the island it was the first ship that had been seen there since her arrival, the first that had ever been seen there by many of the young islanders.

The visitors came ashore, shouting and singing, the men in white duck suits, with red and blue pareos fastened round their waists, the women in long flowing lava-lavas of yellow and rose and green, which they had bought in Tahiti, for they were going to do the thing properly. The lady in yellow had already loosened her hair and crowned herself with frangipanni blossoms.

The islanders flocked around them, examining everything they wore and decorating them with garlands of flowers, just as they had done with Rachel's party. The new arrivals feasted on the white beach of the lagoon in what they believed to be island fashion, and, when the stars came out and the banjoes were tired, they called on the islanders for the songs and dances of the South Seas. The lady in yellow tittered apprehensively and remarked to her neighbour in green that she had heard dreadful things about some of those dances. But she was disappointed on this occasion. The plaintive airs rose and fell around them like the very voice of the wind in the palm trees, and the dances moved as gracefully as the waves broke on the shore.

When the islanders had ended their entertainment, amidst resounding applause, one of the young native women called out a name that seemed to amuse her companions. They instantly echoed it, and one of them snatched a banjo from the hands of a white man. Then they all flew like chattering birds towards a hut which had kept its door closed throughout the day.

They clamoured round it, gleefully nudging each other, as if in expectation of a huge joke. At last the door opened and a grey, bent old

woman appeared. She was of larger build than most of the islanders, and there was something in her aspect that silenced the chatterers, even though they still nudged each other slyly. The girl with the banjo offered it to her almost timidly and said something, to which the old woman shook her head.

"They say she is a witch," said the captain of the *Pearl*, who had been listening to the conversation of the group nearest to him. "They want her to give us some of her music. She used to sing songs apparently before her man drove her out of his house in the old days, but she has not sung them since. They think she might oblige our party for some strange reason. Evidently they've got some little joke they want to play on us. You know these Kanakas have a pretty keen sense of humour."

The visitors gathered round curiously. An island witch was certainly something to record in their diaries. The old woman looked at them for a moment, with eyes like burning coals, through her shaggy elf-locks. They seemed to remind her of something unpleasant. A savage sneer bared her broken teeth. Then she took the banjo in her shaking hands that were distorted by age or some disease. She sat down on her own threshold and touched the strings absently with

her misshapen fingers. The faint sound of it seemed to rouse her, seemed to kindle some sleeping fire within her, and she struck it twice vigorously.

The banjo is not a subtle instrument, but the sound of those two chords drew the crowd to attention as a master holds his audience breathless when he tests his violin before playing.

"Holy smoke!" muttered the owner of the banjo, "where did the old witch learn to do that?"

Then the miracle began. The decrepit fingers drew half a dozen chords that went like fire through the expectant veins of the Europeans, went through them as a national march shivers through the soul of a people when its armies return from war. The haggard, burning eyes between the tattered elf-locks, moistened and softened like the eyes of a Madonna, and the withered mouth, with its broken teeth, began to sing, very softly and quaveringly at first, but gathering strength note by note. The words were those that, "You know, darling, told of the love of a soldier who fought in Flanders more than a hundred years ago":

"Maxwellton braes are bonnie,
Where early fa's the dew,
And it's there that Annie Laurie
Gied me her promise true."

"But it's a white woman," said the lady in the yellow lava-lava, who was still disappointed about the dances, "a white woman gone native! How disgustin'!"

"Ssh!" said somebody else, "she's going to give us some more."

The old witch hardly seemed conscious of their presence now. The slumbering sea of music within her was breaking up through the ice which had sealed and silenced it for so long. She nodded at them, with shining eyes, and muttered thickly with an almost childlike boast:

"Oh, but I could do better than that once. My fingers are stiff. Wait!"

She went into her hut and returned with the violin. Tremblingly she opened a little packet of violin strings.

"It's my last," she said. "I've kept it very carefully; but it won't be as good as it used to be."

The throng watched her breathlessly as she made ready, and the trade wind hushed itself to sleep among the palms.

"When I was in Europe last," she said, "it seemed to me there was darkness coming. People had forgotten the meaning of music like this. They wanted discord and blood and wickedness. I didn't understand it. But you

could see it coming everywhere. Horrible pictures. Women like snakes. Books like lumps of poison. Hatred everywhere. Even the musicians hated each other; and if they thought anyone had genius, do you know, I think they wanted to kill. Of course you know the meaning of this. It's the cry over the lost city before the windows were darkened and the daughters of music brought low."

"Crazy as a loon!" whispered the lady in the yellow lava-lava.

The old woman stood upright in the shadow of a tall palm tree, a shadow that spread around her on the white beach like a great purple star; and then her violin began to speak, began to cry, through the great simple melody of the Largo of Handel, like the soul of an outcast angel.

At the height of its infinite compassion two strings snapped in quick succession, and she sank to the ground with a sob, hugging the violin to her breast as if it were a child.

"That was the last," she said.

They saw her head fall over on her shoulder as she lay back against the stem of the palm, an old, old woman asleep in the deep heart of its purple star of shadow; and they knew instinctively, even before the captain of the *Pearl* advanced to make sure, that it was indeed the last.

PEACHES

VI

PEACHES

1

The big liner was running like a ghost with all lights out on deck and every porthole shrouded. This might seem to the layman almost humorously inconsistent, for every minute or two the blast of her fog-horn went bellowing away into the night, loudly enough to disturb the slumbers of any U-boat lying "doggo" within five miles.

Jim Duncan and I were alone in the smoking-room when the steward brought us our coffee. There were very few passengers, and the first-cabin folk were curiously different from those of peace-time. Most of them, I fancied, were crossing the Atlantic on some business directly connected with the war. There was a Belgian professor from Louvain, for instance, who was taking his family over to the new post that had been found for him at an American University, and there was the wife of an Italian statesman, an American woman, who was returning home

to raise funds for the Red Cross of her adopted country. There were others whom it was not so easy to place, and Jim Duncan would have been among them, I think, if I had not known him. Nobody could have looked more like a civilian and less like an officer of the British Navy than Jim did at this moment. But I knew the job on which he was engaged.

It was in the days before America entered the war, and his mission was to present certain evidence of a widespread German conspiracy to the United States Government. If they approved, he was to co-operate in unearthing the ringleaders. The conspiracy was a very simple one. It seemed likely at the time that the U-boats would soon be unable to work from European bases, and the German Admiralty, always looking a few months ahead, though perhaps ignoring remoter possibilities, were calmly planning, with the help of its agents in America, to work from the other side of the water. The thousand-mile coast-line of the United States had many advantages from the German point of view, especially in its lonelier regions, where there are hundreds of small islands either uninhabited or privately owned, and not necessarily owned by American citizens. The U-boats, it is true, would have to travel farther if they were

to work in European waters as they were planning to do. But already they had been forced by the British patrols to travel more than fifteen hundred miles from their European bases, far to the north of Scotland and west of Ireland, before they could operate against the Atlantic shipping. The slight increase in the distance would be more than repaid by the comparative safety of the submarines. It was planned, in short, for them to work secretly from American bases while a dull-witted British Navy should be vainly endeavouring to close European doors which the enemy was no longer using.

We didn't talk "shop" in the smoking-room, even when we were alone, for the ground had been covered so often. On this particular evening, I remember, we talked chiefly about food. The dinner had been excellent, and it had been a curious sensation to pass from the slight but obvious restrictions of London to a ship which seemed to possess all the resources of the United States.

"I've only been in Berlin once," said Jim, "but I was there long enough to know that they will feel the pinch first and feel it worst. They are rum beggars, the Boches. Think of the Higher Command marking out the early stages of the war by the dinners it was going to have—every

menu carefully planned, one for Brussels, one for Paris, and one for London! I remember lunching at a hotel when I was in Berlin and seeing rather a curious thing. There was a table in the centre of the room laid for what was evidently going to be a very grand affair. It was laid for about twenty people, and I saw a thing I had never seen before. Every champagne glass contained a peach. I asked my waiter what it meant, and he said that von Schramm, the fellow who is one of the moving spirits behind this new submarine campaign, was entertaining some of his pals that day, and this was one of his pretty little fads. He thought it improved the wine, and also that it prevented gout, or some rot of that sort."

"How very German! My chief objection would be that there wouldn't be much room left for the champagne."

"Trust the German for that, my lad. The glasses were extra large, and of a somewhat unusual pattern. As a matter of fact, the decorative effect was rather pretty. It's queer—the way some things stick in your memory and others vanish. I believe that my most vivid impression of the few months I passed in Germany is that blessed table waiting for its guests with the peaches in the champagne glasses. I didn't

see the guests arrive. Wish I had now. There's always something a little stagey, don't you think, about a table waiting for its guests, but this was more so. It looked like the throne of melodrama waiting for its emperor. Curious it should have made such an impression, isn't it? "

I thought not; for it was part of Duncan's business to be impressed by unusual things—more especially when they were symptomatic of something else. It was this that made him so useful, for instance, in that exciting little episode of the cargo of onions which was intercepted—owing to one of his impressions—in a Scandinavian ship. They were perfectly good onions, the first few layers of them, and they looked like perfectly good onions when you burrowed into the lower layers. But Duncan had been obsessed by an absurd desire to see whether they would bounce or not, and when he experimented on the deck they did bounce, bounced like cricket balls, as high as the ship's funnels.

This capture of one of the largest cargoes of contraband rubber was due to an impression he got from two innocent cablegrams which had been intercepted and brought to him at the Admiralty—one of them apparently concerning an operation for appendicitis and the other announcing the death of the patient. His in-

tuitions, indeed, resembled those of the artist, and, though he was one of the smartest sailors in the Navy, he looked more like a Pre-Raphaelite painter's conception of Galahad than anyone I had ever seen in the flesh. He looked exceedingly youthful, and the dead whiteness of his face, which his Philistine brethren described as lantern-jawed, was lighted by the alert eyes of a new age. They had that peculiar glitter which one sees in the eyes of aviators and sometimes in those of the business men accustomed to the electric cities of the New World. His hands were like those of a musician, long and quick and nervous. But I could easily imagine them throttling an enemy.

We turned in early that night, and I dozed fitfully, revolving fragments of our somewhat disconnected conversation. The beautiful sea-cry, "*All's well*," came to me from the watch in the bow as the bell tolled the passage of the hours, and it was not till daybreak that I slept, only to dream of that table in Berlin waiting for its guests with a peach in every champagne glass.

2

As we waited in the cold brilliance of New York harbour a few mornings later and looked at the German steamers that were huddled like gigantic red and black cattle in the docks of the Hamburg-Amerika and North German Lloyd, a telegram was brought aboard which settled our plans.

Duncan was to go down to Washington that night, while I was to go up to Rockport, a little fishing village on the coast of Maine. At this place I was to take a motor-car and drive some fifteen miles to a certain lonely strip of pine-clad coast. There we were to camp out in a tiny cottage, which we could rent from an old sea captain whom I knew before the war. Two artists in quest of a quiet place for work could hardly find a happier hunting-ground. I was particularly glad to find that we could hire a trim little motor-launch in which we could go exploring among the islands that dotted the blue sea for scores of miles. It was a beautiful coast, and their dark peaks of pine were printed like tiny black feathers against a sky of unimaginable sapphire.

Nothing could seem more remote from the devilries of modern war.

Duncan joined me a week later in Captain Humphreys' cottage. It was a small white-painted wooden house among the pine trees on the mainland, built on the rocks which overhung a deep blue inlet of the Atlantic. We discussed our plans on the little veranda, from which we could see half a dozen of the pine-crowned islands that were under suspicion. There were scores of others that we could not see to north and south of us, and we checked them off on the map as we sat there under the dried sunfish and the other queer marine trophies which the old skipper had brought back with him from the South Seas.

The nights were quite cold enough for a fire, though it was only mid-July, and we finished all our plans that evening round the big stove, the kind of thing you see in the big fo'c'sle of a steam trawler, which stood in the centre of Captain Humphreys' parlour. We were more than a little glad, indeed, to let our pipes and the good-smelling pine logs waft their incense abroad, for —like all the dwellers in those parts—the old skipper subsisted through the winter on the cod-fish which he had salted and stored during the summer in his attic, and though his abode was clean and neat as himself, it had the healthy reek

of a trawler as well as its heating apparatus. A large oil lamp hung from the ceiling, and this, too, was none the worse for the moderating influence of a little wood smoke.

"To-morrow, then," said Jim, "we take the motor-launch and have a look at all the islands between this place and Rockport. They've been awfully decent down in Washington about it. The only trouble is that they don't and can't believe it. Exactly the state of mind we were in before the war. Everybody laughing at exactly the same things, from spy stories to signals on the coast. I met a man in the Government who had been taken to a window at midnight to see a light doing the Morse code off this very coast, and he laughed at it. Didn't believe it. Thought it was the evening star. We were like that ourselves. No decent man can believe certain things till they are beyond question. But they've given us a blessing on our wild-goose chase. We may do all the investigating we like, as I understand the position, so long as we leave any resultant action to the United States. This means, I suppose—in old Captain Humphreys' language—that we may be 'rubber-necks,' but we mustn't shoot. Still, I brought the guns with me." He laid two automatic pistols on the table.

"It's more than likely, from what I've been able to gather, that we may have to defend our own skins. Oh, damn that mosquito!" He slapped his ankle and complained bitterly that the old sea captain's faith in his own tough exterior had prevented him from providing his doors and windows with mosquito netting.

* * * * *

It was on the fourth morning of our search that things began to happen. For my own part, I had already begun to be so absorbed in the peace of the world about us that the whole business of the war seemed unreal and our own quest futile. I could no longer wonder at those inhabitants of the New World who were said to look upon our European Armageddon as a bad dream or a morbid tale in a book which it was better not to open. As we chug-chugged along the coast close under the thick pine woods which grew almost to the edge of the foam, I thought I had never breathed an air so fragrant or seen colours so brilliant in earth and sky and sea. Once or twice, as we shut off the motor and lay idle, we heard a thrush in the woods breaking the silence with a peculiarly plaintive liquid call, quite unlike the song of our thrushes at home, but very beautiful. Here and there we passed the little red, blue and green buoys of lobster-pots shining

like jewels as the clear water lapped about them in that amazing sunlight.

We were making for a certain island about which we had obtained some interesting details from Captain Humphreys himself. He told us that it had been purchased two or three years ago by a New Yorker, who was building himself quite a fine place on it. He seemed to be a somewhat mysterious character, for he was never seen on the mainland, and all his supplies were brought up to him on his own large private yacht.

"There's a wharf on the island," said Captain Humphreys, "with deep water running up to it, so that a yacht can sail right up to his porch, as you might say, and you wouldn't know it was there. The cove runs in on the slant, and the pines grow between it and the sea. You wouldn't notice it unless you ran right in at the mouth. It makes a fine private harbour for a yacht, and I believe it has held two at a time. There's a good beach for clams on the west shore, but of course it's private."

We certainly saw no sign of yacht or harbour as we approached the island from the landward side, but we made no departure from our course to look for either. We were bound for the clam-beach, where we intended to do a little clam-poaching.

"It doesn't look promising," said Jim, as we approached the shore. "There doesn't seem to be anybody to warn trespassers off. But perhaps the clam-beach is not regarded as dangerous, and the trespassing begins farther on."

In a few moments we had moored the launch in four feet of water, and were ashore with a couple of clam-rakes. We had dug a couple of hundred, as we walked towards the pine woods, when Jim straightened up and said:

"This makes my back ache, and it's blazing hot. I'm going to have a pipe in the shade up there."

I shouldered my rake and followed him into the wood. As soon as we were well among the trees we began to walk quickly up the thin, winding path, which we supposed would lead us to the neighbourhood of the house.

"Not at all promising," said Jim. "They would never let us ramble about like this if they had anything to conceal. Just for the fun of it, we'll go up to the house and ask if Mr. Chutney Bilge, the novelist, doesn't live there. You want his autograph, don't you?"

In five minutes we had emerged from the pines, and saw before us a very pleasant-looking wooden house with a wide veranda, screened all round with mosquito netting, and backed by

glimpses of blue sea between dark tree-trunks. There was not a soul to be seen, and no sign of its occupants anywhere. We walked up to the porch, pulled open the netted door in the outer screen, and knocked on the door of the house, which stood wide open. We waited and listened, but there was no sound except the ticking of a clock. There was another open door on the right side of the hall. Jim felt a sudden impulse to look through it, and tiptoed quietly forward. He had no sooner looked than he stood as if turned to stone, with so absurd an expression on his face that I instantly came to his side to see what Medusa had caused it. It seemed a very harmless Medusa, but I doubt if anything could have startled me more at the moment. We stood there staring at a table laid for lunch. There were twelve champagne glasses, of a somewhat unusual pattern, and each of these glasses contained a peach.

3

BEFORE I could be quite sure whether I was dreaming or waking, Jim had dashed into the room on the other side of the hall and grabbed up a bundle of papers that had been dropped, as if by someone in a great hurry, all over the table. He glanced at one or two.

"But this—this—settles it," he cried. "Come out of it quickly." And in a few seconds we were in the cover of the woods again.

"Schramm himself is over here apparently. He must have come by U-boat," Jim muttered, as we hurried down the path towards our launch. "If they catch us, we're simply dead and buried and past praying for."

"But what does it mean? Where are they? Why the devil have they left everything open to the first-comer?"

"Beats me completely. But we'd better not wait. The next move is up to Washington."

"Look here, Jim, we'd better be careful about our exit from the woods. If anyone happens to have spotted the launch, we may run our heads into a trap."

I had an uneasy feeling that we were being watched, and that every movement we made was plainly seen by a gigantic but invisible spectator, very much the kind of feeling, I suppose, that insects must have under the lens. I felt sure that we were not going to have it all our own way with this quiet island. Jim hesitated for a moment, but I was insistent that we should take a look at our landing-place before we left our cover. It was a characteristic of Jim that as soon as he had discovered what he wanted he became as forthright a sailor as you could wish to find; and I knew that, if we were to escape with whole skins, or even to make use of our discovery, I should have to exercise my own wits. Fortunately, my own "impressions" began when Jim's finished, for, after he had yielded to my persuasion, we made a slight circuit through the woods and crept out through the long grass on the top of the little cliff overlooking the beach where we had landed. Our clams were still there, in two neat little dumps. So was the launch, but in the stern of it there sat a tall, red-bearded man, who looked like a professor, and a couple of sailors. They were all three talking German in low, excited tones, and they were all three armed.

The launch lay almost directly below us, and

we could hear some of their conversation. I gathered that the luncheon party had gone on board a U-boat, which had just arrived, to inspect the latest improvements. Something had gone wrong. They had submerged, and it seemed to be doubtful whether they could get her up again. That, of course, was why the house was deserted and our trespassing unforbidden. It was probably also the reason why the sentries had been absent, and had only just discovered our launch on their rounds. One of the sailors was aggrieved, it seemed to me, that no effort was being made to obtain other help for the submerged men than the island could lend. His best friend was aboard, and he thought it wicked not to give them a chance, even if it meant their internment. The red-bearded professor was explaining to him, however, in the most highly approved style of modern Germany, that his feelings were by no means logical, and that it was far nobler to make the sacrifice of one's friends than to endanger the State.

"But if the State is a kind of devil," said the sailor, who was a bit of a logician himself, "I prefer my friends, who in the meantime are being suffocated."

"That is a fallacy," the professor was an-

swering, when from the direction of the house there came a confused sound of shouting.

A fourth sailor came tearing down the beach like a maniac.

"Where are the clam-fishers?" he called to the three philosophers. "They are to be taken, dead or alive."

At the same moment I saw the glint of the sun on the revolvers of several other men who were advancing through the woods towards the beach, peering to right and left of them. Without a whisper between us, Jim and I crawled off along the cliff, through the thick undergrowth.

Obviously the submarine had come to the surface, and the merry crowd was on our track. The island was not more than a quarter of a mile in diameter, and I saw no hope of evading our pursuers, of whom there must have been at least twenty, judging from the cries that reached us. There was nothing for it but to choose the best place for putting up a fight, and, as luck would have it, we were already on the best line of defence. The undergrowth between the cliff's edge and the woods was so thick that nobody could discover us, except by crawling up the trail by which we had ourselves entered. It proved to be the only way by which the cliff's edge could be explored, and we had a full half-

mile of the island's circumference, a long ledge only a few feet wide, on which we could crawl in security for the time being till the hunt came up behind us. I remember noticing, even in those moments of peril, that the ground and the bushes were littered with big crab claws and clam shells that had been dropped and picked there by the sea-gulls and crows, and I was thinking in some queer way of the easy life that these birds lead when I almost put my hand on a human skull, protruding from a litter of loose earth, white flakes of shell and crabs' backs. Jim pulled a heap of the evil-smelling stuff away with his clam-rake, and bared the right side of the skeleton. There was a half-rotten clam-rake in the bony clutch of the dead man. Evidently somebody else had paid the penalty before us. The body had been buried, and rain, snow, or the insatiable sea-gulls had uncovered the head.

A few yards farther on the cliff projected so far out that even when one hung right over the edge it was only just possible to see where it met the swirling water, which seemed very deep here. About fifteen yards out there was a big boulder of rock, covered with brown seaweed.

"Look here, Jim," I said, "there's only one real chance for us. We've got to swim

the mile and a half to the mainland, but we can't do it by daylight. We've got to pass six hours till it's dark enough, and there's only one way to do it. How far can you swim under water?"

"About fifty feet," he said. "You're going crazy, old man. It's a mile and a half to the mainland."

"Jim, you're a devil of a man for getting into a scrape. But when it comes to getting out of one I feel a little safer in my own hands. Can you get as far as that rock under water?"

"I think so," he said, and caught on to the suggestion at once.

The cries were coming along the cliff's edge now, and it was a question of only half a minute before some of our pursuers would be on the top of us.

"Hurry, then. Swim to the north of the rock and don't come up till you're on the other side. If you feel yourself rising, grab hold of the seaweed and keep yourself down till you've hauled round the rock. Quick!"

There was a crashing in the bushes not fifty yards away on the cliff as we dived into the clear green water. The plunge carried one farther than I expected, and four or five strokes along the bottom of the sea brought me to the base of the rock. It was quite easy to turn it, and I

was relieved to find that there was a good ledge for landing on the farther side, only an inch or two above the level of the water and quite screened from the island by the rock itself, which was about ten feet in length and curved in a half-moon shape, with the horns pointing towards the mainland. In fact it was like a large Chesterfield couch of stone, covered with brown seaweed, and resolutely turning its back on the island. We were luckier than I had dared to hope, and when in a few seconds Jim had coiled himself on the ledge beside me, I saw by his grin that he thought we had solved the problem of escape. For five minutes we lay dead still, listening to the clamour along the cliff from which we had just dived.

"Thank the Lord, we get the sun here," said Jim at last, as the sounds died away. "There's only one thing that worries me now. What are we to do when they come round in a boat?"

"They won't think of that for some time," I said; "but when they do we must take to the water again and work round behind the rock. We ought to be able to keep it between us and the blighters with any luck. We've only got to keep enough above water to breathe with, and I've seen some fine fancy camouflage done with a little seaweed before now."

We looked at the yard-long fringes of brown seaweed and decided that it would be possible to defy anything but the closest inspection of our rock by the simple process of sliding down into the water and pulling the seaweed over our heads on the side next to the island. There was a reef which would prevent a boat passing on that side.

Our clothes were almost dried by the blazing sun before we were disturbed again. Jim was ruefully contemplating a corn-cob pipe which he affirmed had been ruined by the salt water. He poked the stem at a huge sea-anemone, which immediately sucked it in and held it as firmly as a smoker's mouth, with so ludicrous an effect that Jim's risible faculties were dangerously moved. I was half afraid of one of his volcanic guffaws when we both heard a sound that struck us dumb—the sound of oars coming steadily in our direction. We slipped into the water, according to plan, hauled ourselves round behind the rock, and drew the long thick fringes of seaweed over our heads. We held ourselves anchored there by the brown stems and kept little more than our noses above the water. No concealment could have been more complete. The boat passed on, and in five minutes we were back again on our ledge and drying in the sun.

"Good Lord!" said Jim suddenly, "that

was a near shave. I'd forgotten that beastly thing."

He pointed to the sea-anemone, which was still sucking at the corn-cob pipe, and could hardly have been missed by the boat's crew if they had been looking for anything like it.

"Lord, what a shave!" he said again. "What would Schramm have said if he had seen it?"

Then, as we stared at the absurd marine creature, we rocked in silent spasms of mirth—so strangely compounded is human nature—picturing the bewildered faces of the Boches at a sight which would have meant our death.

The sense of humour was benumbed in both of us before long. The sun was dropping low and we did not dry as quickly as before. There was a stillness on the island which boded no good, I thought, though our pursuers evidently believed that we had escaped them.

"They probably think we swam ashore earlier in the game," said Jim. "They must be sick at not having spotted us."

"I wonder what they are up to now?"

"Probably destroying evidence and getting ready to clear out, if they really have a notion that their big men over here may be involved. Unfortunately, these papers don't give any

names away, so far as I can see, though it's quite obvious what they were doing."

We lay still and waited, listening to the strangely peaceful lapping of the water round our rock and watching the big sea-perch and rock-cod that moved like shadows below.

"I wonder if that fellow suspects mischief," said Jim, pointing over the cliff. "By Jove! isn't he splendid?"

Over the highest point of the island an eagle was mounting in great, slow, sweeping circles, without one beat of the long, dark wings that must have measured eight feet from tip to tip.

"It's too splendid to be the German eagle. Praise the Lord, it's the native species, and he's taking his time because he has to take wide views. He has to soar high enough to get his bearings."

Up and up the glorious creature circled, till he dwindled in the dazzling blue to the size of a sea-gull, and still he wheeled and mounted till he became a black dot no bigger than an English skylark. Then he moved, like a bullet, due East.

"D'you know, I almost believe in omens," said Jim. "Ah, look out! There they come!"

The masts of a large yacht, which must have emerged from the private harbour of which Cap-

tain Humphreys spoke, came slowly round the island. We had only just time to slip into the water behind our rock before she came into full view. She passed so near to us that the low sun cast the travelling shadows of her railing almost within reach of my hand, and the shadows of her two boats on the port side came along the clear green water between us and the island like the grey ghosts of some old pirate's dinghies.

She must have been still in sight, and we were still in our hiding-place, when it seemed as if the island tried to leap towards the sky, and we were deafened by a terrific concussion. Fragments of wood and great pieces of stone dropped all round us in the poppling water, and more than one deadly missile struck the rock itself.

"They've blown up the whole show!" cried Jim. "There can't be anybody left alive on the island!"

We waited—ten minutes or more—to see if other explosions were to follow. Then we swam for the clam-beach to investigate. It was littered with fragments of the buildings that had been destroyed. The tarred roof of a shed had been dropped there almost intact, as if from the claws of some gigantic eagle. The pine wood looked as if it had been subjected to a barrage fire, and

in many places the undergrowth was burning furiously.

We dashed up the path, with the smoke stinging our eyes, towards the dull red glow which was already beginning to rival the deepening crimson of the Maine sunset. The central portion of the house was still standing, though much of it had been blown bodily away, and the fire was laying fierce hands upon it from all sides. We turned to the north, where we supposed the wharf had been. The remains of half a dozen sheds were burning on one side of the cove, and it looked as if half the cliff had been tumbled into it on the other.

The heat of the fire along the wharf was so fierce that we turned back to the house again.

"Well," said Jim, "there's evidence enough to give a few good headlines to the neutral Press—'*Gasolene Explosion on Maine Coast! Wealthy New Yorker Escapes Death in Fiery Furnace!*' Fortunately, there's also enough for Washington to lay up in its memory."

Another section of the house fell as we looked at it, and we saw the interior of the dining-room, with the flames licking up the three remaining walls. By one of those curious freaks of high explosives, the table was hardly disarranged, and

our last glimpse of it, through a fringe of fire, showed us those twelve queer champagne glasses. They stood there, flickering like evil goblins, a peach in every glass. . . .

We watched them for five minutes. Then the whole scintillating fabric collapsed, and we sat down to wait for the frantic motor-boat, which was already chugging towards us, with the reporter of the *Rockport Sentinel* furiously writing in her bows.

"MAY MARGARET"

VII

"MAY MARGARET"

Clerk Sanders and May Margaret
Walked ower yon garden green,
And sad and heavy was the love
That fell thae twa between.

1

May Margaret was an American girl, married to a lieutenant in the British Army named Brian Davidson. When the regretful telegram from the War Office announcing his death in action was delivered to her in her London apartment, she read it without a quiver, crumpled it up, threw it into the fire, and leaned her head against her arm under his photograph on the mantelpiece. When her heart began to beat again she went to her bedroom and locked the door. This was not the Anglo-American love affair of fiction. Both of them were poverty-stricken in the estimation of their friends, and it was only by having her black evening dress "done over" and practising other strict economies for a whole year that May Margaret had been able to sail

from New York to work in a European hospital. The marriage had taken place a little more than three months ago, while Davidson was home on a few days' leave.

After the announcement of his death she did not emerge from her room until the usual letter arrived from the front, explaining, with the usual helplessness of the brother officer, that Davidson was really "one of the best," that "everybody liked him," and that "he was the life and soul of his company." But the letter contained one thing that she was not expecting, an official photograph of the grave, a quarter-plate picture of an oblong of loose earth, marked with a little cross, made apparently of two sticks of kindling wood. And it was this that had brought her back to life again. It was so strangely matter-of-fact, so small, so complete, that it brought her out of the great dark spaces of grief. It reminded her of something that Davidson had once written in a letter from the trenches: "Things out here are not nearly so bad as people at home imagine. At home one pictures the war as a great blaze of horror. Out here things become more sharply defined, as the lights of a city open up when you approach them, or as the Milky Way splits itself up into points of light under the telescope. I have never seen a dead

body yet that looked more imposing than a suit of old clothes. The real man was somewhere else."

She examined the photograph with a kind of curiosity. In this new sense of the reality of death the rattle of the traffic outside had grown strange and dreamlike, and the rattle of the tea things and the smell of the buttered toast which an assiduous, but discreet, landlady placed at her side, seemed as fantastic and remote as any fairy-tale. All the trivial details of the life around her had assumed a new and mysterious quality. She seemed to be moving in a phantasmagorical world. The round red face of the landlady came and went like the goblin things you may see over your shoulder in a looking-glass at twilight. And the centre of all this insubstantial dream-stuff was that one vivid oblong of loose earth, marked with two sticks of kindling wood, in the neat and sharply defined official photograph.

There was something that looked like a black thread entwining the arms of the tiny cross, and she puzzled over it stupidly, wondering what it could be. "I suppose I could write and ask," she said to herself. Then an overmastering desire came over her. She must go and see it. She must go and see the one fragment of the

earth that remained to her, if only for the reason that there, perhaps, she might find the relief of tears. But she had another reason also, a reason that she would never formulate, even to herself, an overmastering impulse from the depths of her being.

May Margaret had no intimate friends in London. She had established herself in these London lodgings with the cosmopolitan independence of the American girl, whose own country contains distances as great as that from London to Petrograd. The world shrinks a little when your own country is a continent, and it was with no sense of remoteness that she now went to the telephone and rang up the London office of the *Chicago Bulletin*.

"I want to speak to Mr. Harvey," she said. "Is this Mr. Harvey? This is Mrs. Davidson —Margaret Grant—you remember, don't you? I want to see you about something very important. You are sending people out to the front all the time, aren't you, in connection with your newspapers? Well, I want to know if you can arrange for me to go . . . Yes, as a woman correspondent. . . . Well, I've got to manage it somehow. . . . Won't you come and see me and talk it over? . . . All right, at six-thirty. Good-bye."

The official photograph was still in her hand when Mr. William K. Harvey, of the *Chicago Bulletin*, was announced. He was a very young man to be managing the London office of a great newspaper, but this was not a disadvantage for May Margaret's purpose.

"So you want to go to the front," he said, settling down into the arm-chair on the other side of the fire. "It would certainly make a great story. We ought to be able to syndicate it all through the Middle West; but you'll have to give up the idea of the British front. We might manage the French front, I think."

"But I want particularly to go to Arras. Surely you can manage it, Mr. Harvey. You must know all sorts of influential people here." Her voice, with its husky contralto notes, rather like those of a boy whose voice has lately broken, had always an appeal for Mr. Harvey; it was particularly pleasing just then. He beamed through his glasses and ran his hand through his curly hair.

"I was talking to Sir William Robertson about a very similar proposition only yesterday, and Sir William told me that he'd do anything on earth for the *Chicago Bulletin*, but the War Office, which is in heaven, had decided finally

to allow no women correspondents at the British front."

May Margaret rose and went to the window. For a moment she pressed her brow against the cool glass, and as she stared hopelessly at the 'buses rumbling by an idea came to her. She wondered that she had not thought of it before.

"Come here, Mr. Harvey," she said. "I want to show you something."

He joined her at the window. A 'bus had halted by the opposite pavement. The conductor was swinging lightly down by the hand-rail, a very youthful-looking conductor, in breeches and leggings.

"Is that a man or a woman?" said May Margaret.

"A woman, isn't it?"

"And that?" She pointed to another figure striding by in blue overalls and a slouch hat.

"I don't know. There are so many of them about now that on general principles I guess it's a woman. Besides, it looks as if it would be in the army if it were not a woman."

"Yes, but I am an American correspondent," said May Margaret.

"Gee!" said Mr. Harvey, surveying her from head to foot. His face looked as if all the

printing presses of the *Chicago Bulletin* were silently at work behind it. She was tall and lean—a college friend had described her exactly as "half goddess and half gawk." Her face was of the open-air type. Her hair would have to be cropped, of course. "Gee!" he said again. "It would be the biggest scoop of the war."

A fortnight later a slender youth in khaki-coloured clothes, with leggings, arrived at the Foreign Office, presented a paper to a sad-eyed messenger in the great hall, and was led to the disreputable old lift, which, as usual, bore a notice to the effect that it was not working to-day. The sad-eyed messenger heaved the usual sigh, and led the way up three flights of broad stone stairs to a very dark waiting-room. There were three other young men in the room, but it was almost impossible to see their faces.

"Mr. Grant, of the *Tribune*, wasn't it, sir?" said the messenger.

"Mr. Martin Grant, of the *Chicago Bulletin*," said May Margaret. And the messenger shuffled into the distance along a gloomy corridor which seemed to be older than any tomb of the Pharaohs, and destined to last as long again.

In a few minutes a young Englishman, who looked like an army officer in mufti, but was really a clerk in the Foreign Office, named Julian Sinclair, was making himself very charming to the four correspondents. To one of them he talked very fluently in Spanish; to another he spoke excellent Swedish, bridging several moments of misunderstanding with smiles and gestures that would have done credit to a Macchiavelli; to the third, because he was a Greek, he spoke French; and to Martin Grant, because he was an American, he spoke the language of George Washington, and behaved as if he were a fellow-countryman of slightly different, possibly more broad-minded, but certainly erroneous politics.

Then he gave them all a few simple directions. He was going to have the pleasure of escorting them to the front. It was necessary that they should be accompanied by someone from the Foreign Office, he explained, in order to save them trouble; and they had been asked to met him there to-day for purposes of identification and to get their passports. These would have to be stamped by both the British and French military authorities at an address which he gave them, and they would please meet him at Charing Cross Station at twelve o'clock to-

morrow. It was all very simple, and Mr. Martin Grant felt greatly relieved.

There was a drizzle of rain the next morning, for which May Margaret was grateful. It was a good excuse for appearing at the station in the Burberry raincoat, which gave her not only a respite from self-consciousness, but an almost military air. Her cloth cap, too, the peak of which filled her strong young face with masculine shadows, approximated to the military shape. It was a wise choice, for the soft slouch hat, which she had tried at first, had persistently assumed a feminine aspect, no matter how she twisted it or pulled it down on her close-cropped head.

She was the first of the party to arrive, and when Julian Sinclair hurried along the platform with the three foreign correspondents, there was no time left for conversation before they were locked in their compartment of the military train. They were the only civilians aboard.

She dropped into a corner seat with her newspaper, but her eyes and brain were busy with the scene outside. The train was crammed with troops, just as it had been on that other day when she stood outside on the platform, like those other women there, and said good-bye to

Brian. She was living it all over again as she watched those farewells; but she felt nearer to him now, as if she were seeing things from his own side, almost as if she had broken through the barriers and taken some dream-train to the next world in order to follow him.

There was a very young soldier leaning from the window of the next compartment. He was talking to a girl with a baby in her arms. Her wide eyes were fixed on his face with the same solemn expression as those of a child, dark, innocent eyes with the haunting beauty of a Madonna. They were trying to say something to each other, but the moment had made them strangers, and they could not find the words.

"You'll write," she said faintly.

He nodded and smiled airily. A whistle blew. There was a banging of doors and a roar of cheering. The little mother moved impulsively forward, climbed on to the footboard, threw her right arm around the neck of her soldier, and drew his face down to her own.

"Stand back there!" bellowed the porters. But the girl's arm was locked round the lad's neck as if she were drowning, and they took no notice. The train began to move. A crippled soldier, in blue hospital uniform and red tie,

hobbled forward on his crutch and took hold of the girl.

"Break away," he said gruffly. "Break away, lass."

He pulled her back to the platform. Then he hobbled forward with the moving train and spoke to the young soldier.

"If you meet the blighter wot gave me this," he said, pointing to his amputated thigh, "you give 'im 'ell for *me!*"

It was a primitive appeal, but the boy pulled himself together immediately as the veteran face, so deeply ploughed with suffering, savagely confronted his own. And as the train moved on, and the wounded man stood there, upright on his crutch, May Margaret saw that there were tears in those fierce eyes—eyes so much older than their years—and a tenderness in the coarse face that brought her heart into her throat.

The journey to Folkestone was all a dream, a dream that she was glad to be dreaming, because she was now on the other side of the barrier that separated people at home from those at the front. The queerest thoughts passed through her mind. She understood for a moment the poor groping endeavours of the war-bereft to break through those darker barriers

of the material world and get into touch, no matter how vaguely, with the world beyond. She felt that in some strange way she was succeeding.

They had lunch on the train; she forced herself to drink some black coffee and nibble at some tepid mutton. She was vaguely conscious that the correspondents were enjoying themselves enormously at the expense of the State, and she shuddered at the grotesque sense of humour which she discovered amongst her thoughts at this moment.

The Channel crossing on the troopship brought her nearer yet. There was hardly standing room on any of the decks, and the spectacle was a very strange one, for all the crowded ranks in khaki, officers and men, had been ordered to wear lifebelts. A hospital ship which had just arrived was delivering its load of wounded men to the docks, and these also were wearing lifebelts.

The sunset light was fading as the troopship moved out, and the seas had that peculiar iridescent smoothness as of a delicately tinted skin of very faintly burning oils, which they so often wear when the wind falls at evening. On one side of the ship a destroyer was ploughing up white mounds of foam, and overhead there

was one of the new silver-skinned scouting airships.

Away to the east a great line of transports was returning home with the wounded, and the horizon was one long stream of black smoke. It was all so peaceful that the lifebelts seemed an anomaly, and it was difficult to realise the full meaning of this traffic. The white cliffs of England wore a spiritual aspect that only the hour and its grave significance could lend them, and May Margaret thought that England had never looked so beautiful. There were other troopships, all crowded, about to follow, and their cheers came faintly across the water. The throb of the engines carried May Margaret's ship away rhythmically, and somewhere on the lower deck a mouth organ began playing, almost inaudibly, "*It's a long, long Way to Tipperary.*" The troops were humming the tune too softly for it to be called singing, and it all blended with the swish of the water and the hum of the engine-room, like a memory of other voices lost in France and Flanders. May Margaret looked down at the faces. They, too, were grave and beautiful with evening light, and the brave, unquestioning simplicity of it all seemed to her an inexpressibly noble thing. She thought for a moment that no pipes among the mists of glen

or mountain, no instrument on earth, ever had the beauty of that faint music. It was one of those unheard melodies that are better than any heard. The sea bore the burden. The winds breathed in it undertone, and its message was one of a peace that she could not understand. Perhaps, under and above all the tragedies of the hour, the kingdom of heaven was there.

The cliffs became ghostly in the distance, and suddenly on the dusky waters astern there shone a great misty star. It was the first flash of the shore searchlights, and May Margaret watched it flashing long after the English coast had disappeared. Then she lost the searchlight also, and the transport was left with the dark destroyer to find its way through whatever perils there might be to the French coast. Millions of men—she had read it—had been transported, despite mines and submarines, without the loss of a single life. She had often wondered how it was possible. Now she saw the answer.

A little black ship loomed up ahead of them and flashed a signal to their escort. Far through the dusk she saw them, little black trawlers and drifters, *Lizzie* and *Maggie* and *Betsy Jane*, signalling all that human courage could discover, of friend or foe, on the face of the waters or under them.

In a very short time they caught the first glimpse of the searchlights on the French coast, and soon afterwards they drew into a dark harbour, amid vague cheerings and occasional bursts of the "Marseillaise" from wharves thronged with soldiers of a dozen nationalities. A British officer edged his way through the crowd below them on the quay and waved his hand to Julian Sinclair.

"Ah! there's our military guide, Captain Crump. Now, if you'll follow me and keep together, we'll get our passports examined quickly and join him," said Sinclair, obviously relieved at the prospect of sharing his neutrals with a fellow-countryman.

There followed a brief but exact scrutiny and stamping of papers by an aquiline-nosed gentleman whose gold-rimmed spectacles suggested a microscopical carefulness; a series of abrupt introductions to Captain Crump on the gloomy wharf; a hasty bite and sup in a station restaurant, where blue uniforms mingled with khaki, and some red-tabbed British staff officers at the next table were drinking wine with some turbaned Indian princes. It was a strange glimpse of colour and light rifting the darkness for a moment. Then they followed Captain Crump again, through great tarpaulined muni-

tion dumps and loaded motor-lorries, to the two motor-cars behind the station. In these they were whirled, at forty miles an hour, along one of the poplar-bordered roads of France that seemed to-night as ghostly as those titanic alleys of Ulalume in the song of May Margaret's national poet. Once or twice, as they passed through a cluster of cottages, the night wind brought a whiff of iodoform, and reminded her that flesh and blood were fighting with pain and death somewhere in that darkness.

Every few minutes they passed troops of dark marching men. Several times it seemed to her that she recognised the face for which she was looking in some momentary glimmer of starlight.

At last they reached the village where the guests of G.H.Q. were to be quartered. The foreigners were assigned to the château which was used as a guest-house, but there had been one or two unexpected arrivals, and Captain Crump asked the American correspondent if he would mind occupying a room in the house of the curé, a hundred yards away up the village street. The American correspondent was exceedingly glad to do so, and was soon engaged in attempts at conversation with the friendly old man in the black cassock, who did his best to

make her welcome. There were no more difficulties for her that night, except that the curé had very limited notions as to the amount of water she required for washing.

They set out early the next morning on their way to that part of the front which she had particularly asked to see. The other correspondents had agreed that a burial-ground of the kind that she described, close to the front lines, would make an excellent subject. The long straight poplar-bordered road, bright with friendly sunshine now, absorbed her. She heard the chatter of the other occupants of the car as in a dream.

"Have you read Anatole France?" said the Spaniard. (He was anxious for improving conversation, and wore a velvet coat totally unsuited to the expedition.) But May Margaret's every thought was plodding along with the plodding streams of dusty, footsore men in steel hats, and she did not answer. She pointed vaguely to the women working in the fields to save the harvest, and the anti-aircraft guns that watched the sky from behind the sheaves. At every turn she saw something that reminded her of things she had seen before, in some previous existence, when she had lived in the life of her lover and travelled through it all with his own eyes. She was pass-

ing through his existence again. He was part of all this: these camps by the roadside where soldiers, brown as gipsies, rambled about with buckets, these endless processions of motor-lorries, with men and munitions and guns all streaming to the north on every road, as if whole nations were setting out on a pilgrimage and taking their possessions with them; these endless processions of closed ambulances returning, marked with the Red Cross.

Once, over a bare brown stretch of open country, a magnificent body of Indian cavalry swept towards them, every man sitting his horse like a prince; and the British officers, with their sunburned faces and dusky turbans, hardly distinguishable from their native troops.

"Glorious, aren't they?" said Sinclair, leaning back from his place beside the chauffeur. "But they haven't had a chance yet. If only we could get the Boches out of their burrows and loose our cavalry at them!"

She nodded her head, but her thoughts were elsewhere. This picturesque display seemed to belong to a bygone age; it was quite unrelated to this war of chemists and spectacled old men who disbelieved in chivalry, laughed at right and wrong, and had killed the happiness of the entire world.

She noticed whenever they passed a village or a farm-house, or even a cattle shed now, that the smell of iodoform brooded over everything. All these wounded acres of France were breathing it out like the scent of some strange new summer blossom. A hundred yards away from the ruined outhouses of every village she began to breathe it. Her senses were unusually keen, but it dominated the summer air so poignantly that she could not understand why these meticulously vivid men—the foreign correspondents—were unaware of it. It turned the whole countryside into a series of hospital wards; and the Greek was now disputing with the Spaniard about Home Rule for Ireland.

At last, in the distance, they heard a new sound that enlarged the horizon as when one approaches the sea. It was the mutter of the guns, a deep many-toned thunder, rolling up and dying away, but without a single break, incessant as the sound of the Atlantic in storm.

The cars halted in what had once been a village and was now a rubbish heap of splinters and scarred walls and crumbling mortar. The correspondents alighted and followed Captain Crump across a broad open plain pitted with shell holes. The incessant thunder of the guns deepened as they went.

"Don't touch anything without consulting me," snapped Crump at the Spaniard, who was nosing round an unexploded shell and thinking of souvenirs. "The Boches have a charming trick of leaving things about that may go off in your hands. A chap picked up a spiked helmet here the other day. They buried him in the graveyard that Mr. Grant wants to see. It's a very small grave. There wasn't much left of him."

The burial-ground lay close under a ridge of hills, and they approached it through a maze of recently captured German trenches. It was a strange piece of sad ordered gardening in a devastated world. Every minute or two the flash and shock of a concealed howitzer close at hand shook the loose earth on the graves, but only seemed to emphasise the still sleep of this acre. It held a great regiment of graves, mounds of fresh-turned earth in soldierly ranks, most of them marked with tiny wooden crosses, rough bits of kindling wood. Some of the crosses bore names, written in pencil. There was one that bore the names of six men, and the grave was hardly large enough for a child. They had been blown to pieces by a single shell.

They passed through the French section first. Here there was an austere poetry, a simplicity

that approached the sublime in the terrible regularity of the innumerably repeated inscription, "*Mort pour la France.*" In the British section there was a striking contrast. There was not a word of patriotism, but, though the graves were equally regular, an individuality of inscription that interested the Spanish correspondent greatly.

"It is here we pass from Racine to Shakespeare," he said, pointing to a wooden cross that bore the words:

> In loving memory of Jim,
> From his old pal,
> The Artful Dodger,
> "Gone but not forgotten."

"No, no, no," cried the Greek correspondent, greatly excited by the literary suggestion. "From Flaubert to Dickens! Is it not so, Captain Crump?"

Captain Crump grunted vaguely and moved on towards the soldier in charge. May Margaret followed him, the photograph in her hand.

"We want to find number forty-eight," said Captain Crump.

The soldier saluted and led the way to the other end of the ground. Many of the graves here had not been named. There had evidently been some disaster which made it difficult. Some of them carried the identification disc.

"This is number forty-eight, sir," said the soldier, pausing before a mound that May Margaret knew already by heart. "May I look at the photograph, sir? Yes. You see, that's the rosary—that black thing—round the cross."

"The rosary! I don't understand." May Margaret looked at the string of beads on the cross that bore the name of Brian Davidson.

"I suppose he was a Roman Catholic, sir. They must have taken it from the body."

"No, he was not a Catholic," whispered May Margaret. She felt as if she must drop on her knees and call on the mute earth to speak, to explain, to tell her who lay beneath.

"There must be a mistake," she said at last, and her own voice rang in her ears like the voice of a stranger. "I must find out. How can I find out?"

Her face was bloodless as she confronted Captain Crump.

"There's some terrible mistake," she said again. "I can't face his people at home till I find out. He may be——" but that awful word of hope died on her lips.

"I'll do my best," said Captain Crump. "It's very odd, certainly, but I shouldn't—er—hope for too much. You see, if he were living, they wouldn't have been likely to overlook it.

It's possible that he may be there—or there." He pointed to two graves without a name. "Or again, he may be missing, of course, or a prisoner. His lot are down at Arras now. We'll get into touch with them to-morrow, and I'll make inquiries. You want to pass a night in the trenches, don't you? I think it can be arranged for you to go to that section to-morrow night. Then we can kill two birds with one stone."

May Margaret thanked him. Behind them she heard, with that strange sense of double meanings which the most commonplace accidents of life can awake at certain moments, the voice of one of the correspondents still arguing with the others. "Here, if you like, is Shakespeare," he said:

> "'How should I your true love know
> From another one.'"

The quotation, lilted inanely as a nursery rhyme, pierced her heart like a flight of silver arrows.

"You have not a very pleasant business," the correspondent continued, addressing a soldier at work in an open grave.

"I've 'ad two years in the trenches, sir, and I'm glad to get it," he replied.

"Little Christian crosses, planted against

the heathen, creeping nearer and nearer to the Rhine," murmured Julian Sinclair on the other side of May Margaret.

The multiplicity of ways in which it seemed possible for both soldiers and civilians to regard the war was beginning to rob her of the power to think.

On the way back to the château, through the dust, they passed a body of men in steel hats marching up to the trenches. They were singing a ballad of their own which May Margaret had heard Brian humming once or twice :

Fat Fritz went out, all camouflaged, like a beautiful bumble-bee,
With daffodil stripes and 'airy legs to see what he could see,
By the light of the moon, in No Man's Land, he climbed an apple tree
And he put on his big round spectacles, to look for gay Paree.

And I don't suppose he'll do it again
For months, and months, and months,
I don't suppose he'll do it again
For months, and months, and months ;
For Archie is only a third class shot,
But he brought him down at once,

AND

I don't suppose he'll do it again
For months, and months, and months.

Soon afterwards, with all these themes changing and interchanging in her bewildered

mind, May Margaret heard Julian Sinclair calling through the dark from the car ahead of them: "Take a good look at the village that we're coming to now; it's the village of Crécy." The stars that watched the ancient bowmen had nothing now to tell her, but, a few minutes later, as another body of troops came tramping through the dark to another stanza of their song, there seemed to be an ancient and unconquerable mass of marching harmonies behind the lilt of the Cockney ballad, like the mass of the sea behind the breaking wave:

> 'E called 'em the Old Contemptibles,
> But 'e only did it once;
> And I don't suppose 'e'll do it again
> For months, and months, and months.

They dined at the château that evening, and May Margaret slipped away early to the house of the curé. Before she slept she took out Brian's last letter and read it. She sat on the narrow bed under the little black crucifix with the ivory Christ looking down at her from the bare wall of her room. She was glad that it was there, for it embodied the master thought of that day's pilgrimage. Never before had she realised how that ancient symbol was dominating this war; how it was repeated and repeated over thousands of acres of young men's graves;

and with what a new significance the wayside crosses of France were now stretching out their arms in the night of disaster.

In Brian's letter there was very little about himself, and this was characteristic of him, for he had always been somewhat impatient of the "lyrical people," as he called them, who were "so eloquently introspective" about the war, and he had carried his prejudice even into his correspondence. She was reading his letter again to-night because she remembered that it expressed something of her own bewilderment at the multiplicity of ways in which people were talking and thinking of the international tragedy.

"I have heard," he wrote, "every possible kind of opinion out here, with the exception of one. I have never heard anyone suggest any possible end for this war but the defeat of the Hun. But I *have* heard, over and over again, ridicule of the idea that this war is going to end war, or even make the world better. Along with that I've often heard praise of the very militaristic system that we are trying to abolish altogether. Of course this is only among certain sets of men. But this war has become a war of ideas, and ideas are not always contained or divided by the lines of trenches. We are

fighting things out amongst ourselves in all the belligerent countries, and the most crying need of the Allies to-day is a leader who can crystallise their own truest thoughts and ideals for them.

"You know what my dream was, always, in the days when I was trying my prentice hand in literature. I wanted to help in the greatest work of modern times—the task of bringing your country and mine together. Our common language (and that implies so much more than people realise) is the greatest political fact in the modern world; and, thank God, it's beyond the reach of politicians. In England we exaggerate the importance of the mere politician. We do not realise the supreme glory of our own inheritance, or even the practical aspects of it; the practical value of the fact that every city and town and village over the whole of your continent paid homage to Shakespeare during the tercentenary. Carlyle was right when he compared that part of our inheritance with the Indian Empire. It is in our literature that we can meet and read each other's hearts and minds, and that has been our greatest asset during the war. Think what it will mean when two hundred million people thirty years hence in North America are reading that

literature and sharing it. Shelley understood it. You remember what he says in the 'The Revolt of Islam.' The Germans understand; that's why they're so anxious to introduce compulsory German into your schools and colleges. But our own reactionaries are afraid to understand it.

"After all, this war is only a continuation of the Revolutionary war, when the Englishmen who signed the Declaration of Independence fought an army of hired Germans directed by Germans. Even their military maps were drawn up in German. It's the same war and the same cause, and I believe that the New World eventually will come into it. Then we shall have a real leadership. The scheming reactionaries in Europe will fail to keep us apart. We shall yet see our flags united. And then, despite all the sneers of the little folk on both sides of the Atlantic, we shall be able to suppress barbarism in Europe and say (as you and I have said):

"'*Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.*'

"There seems to be an epidemic of verse among the armies. I haven't caught it very badly yet, but these were some of my symptoms in a spare moment last week:

"How few are they that voyage through the night,
On that eternal quest
For that strange light beyond our light,
That rest beyond our rest!

"And they who, seeking beauty, once descry
Her face, to most unknown;
Thenceforth like changelings from the sky
Must walk their road alone.

"So once I dreamed. So idle was my mood;
But now, before these eyes,
From those foul trenches, black with blood,
What radiant legions rise!

"And loveliness over the wounded earth awakes
Like wild flowers in the Spring;
Out of the mortal chrysalis breaks
Immortal wing on wing.

"They rise like flowers, they wander on wings of light,
Through realms beyond our ken,
The loneliest soul is companied to night
By hosts of unknown men."

2

At ten o'clock the next morning the two cars were moving at sixty miles an hour along a road that ran parallel with the German trenches. There was a slight screen of canvas to hide the traffic, for the road by Dead Man's Corner was not the safest way into Arras at that time. But they reached the city without misadventure, and May Margaret felt nearer now than ever to the secret of her quest.

No dream was ever so strange as this great echoing shell of the deserted city where he, too, had walked so recently. He, too, had passed along these cracked pavements, keeping close to the wall in order to escape observation from the enemy, whose lines ran through one end of the city at this moment. He had seen these pitiful interiors of shattered houses where sometimes the whole front had been blown away, leaving the furniture still intact on two floors, and even pictures, a little askew, on the walls. He had seen that little black crucifix over that bed, crossed this grass-grown square, and gone into the shattered railway station, where the many-

coloured tickets were strewn like autumn leaves over the glass-littered floor. The Spaniard filled his pockets with them.

They went down a narrow street to the ruins of the cathedral. On one of the deserted houses there was a small placard announcing some Parisian wares, the only sign of the outside world in all that echoing solitude. The neutrals rejoiced greatly before an empty insurance office which still displayed an advertisement of its exceedingly reasonable rates for the lives of peaceful citizens. Their merriment was stopped abruptly by a hollow boom that shook the whole city and rumbled echoing along the vacant streets from end to end.

"That's a Boche shell," said Crump. "It sounds as if they've got the cathedral again."

At noon they lunched under the lee of a hill just outside Arras that had been drenched with blood a few weeks earlier. The great seas of thunder ebbed and flowed incessantly from sky to sky as if the hill were the one firm island in the universe and all the rest were breaking up and washing around them. The amazing incongruity of things bewildered May Margaret again. It was more fantastic than any dream. They sat there at ease, eating chicken, munching sandwiches, filling their cups with red wine

and white, and ending with black coffee, piping hot from the thermos bottle. Great puffs of brown smoke rose in the distance where our shells were dropping along the chalky thread of the German trenches. It looked as if the trees were walking out from a certain distant wood. Bees and butterflies came and went through the sunshine, and in the stainless blue sky overhead there was a rush and rumour as of invisible trains passing to and fro. The neutrals amused themselves by trying to distinguish between our own and the enemy shells.

At two o'clock Crump rose. "I'll take you along now, Grant, if you are ready," he said. "The rest of you wait here. I shall be back in about ten minutes."

May Margaret stumbled after him down the hill. At the foot a soldier was waiting, and, hardly conscious of the fact that she had exchanged one guide for another, she found herself plodding silently beside him on her unchanging quest toward the communication trenches.

"What do they think about things in England, sir?" said her new companion at last with a curiously suppressed eagerness.

"They are very hopeful," said May Margaret.

"When do they think it will be over?"

"Some of them say in six months."

"Ah, yes. I've been here three years now, and they always say that. At the end of the six months they'll say it again."

It was the first open note of depression that May Margaret had heard. "Do most of the men feel like that?" she asked.

"They don't say so, sir, but they all want it to be over." Then he added, with the doggedness of his kind, "Not till we get what we're fighting for, of course. You're a correspondent, sir, aren't you? Well, I never seen the real fax put in the papers yet. There was one of these soldier writers the other day. I saw his book in the Y.M.C.A. hut. He said that the only time he nearly broke his heart was when there was a rumour that Germany was asking for peace before he was able to get into it hisself. That's what I call b . . . . y selfish, sir. All this poytry!"—he spat into a shell hole—"making pictures out of it and talking about their own souls. Mind you, I'm all for finishing it properly, but it ain't right the way they look at it. There's some of 'em say they're glad the Belgians had their throats cut, because it's taught their own b . . . . y selves the beauty of sacrifice. If what they say is true, why the hell do they want the war ever to stop at all?

P'raps if it went on for ever we should all of us learn the b . . . . y beauty of it, and keep on learning it till there wasn't anyone left. There was a Member of Parliament out here the other day. He saw three poor chaps trying to wash in a mine crater full of muddy water. Covered with lice they was. The paper described it afterwards. The right honourable gentleman laughed 'artily, it said, same as they say about royalty. Always laughing 'artily. P'raps he didn't laugh. I dunno about that. But if he did, I'd like him to 'ave a taste of the fun hisself. And if 'e didn't, I'd like the newspaper to 'ave some."

They were entering the long tunnel of the communication trench now. The soldier went ahead, and May Margaret followed, through smells of earth and the reek of stale uniforms for a mile or more, till they came to the alert eyes along the fire-step of the front-line trench.

"Here's Major Hilton, sir." A lean young man with a thin aquiline nose and a face of Indian red approached them, stepping like a cat along the trench.

"Mr. Grant?" he said.

May Margaret nodded, and they were about to shake hands when one side of the trench seemed to rise up and smash against their faces

with a roar that stunned them. May Margaret picked herself up at once, wiping bits of grit out of her eyes. The bombardment appeared to be growing in intensity.

"That was pretty near," said Major Hilton. "You had better come into my dug-out till this blows over."

He led the way into his gloomy little cavern. It was not much of a shelter from a direct hit, but it would protect them from flying splinters at least.

"Mr. Davidson was my friend," said May Margaret at once. "I know his people. I think there must be some mistake about—about the grave."

"You're not a relative of his, are you?" said Major Hilton. "Had you known him for long?"

"No. Less than a year."

"Well, I don't mind telling *you* that there *was* a mistake. We discovered it a few hours after it was made, but we thought it better not to upset his people by giving them further details."

"He was killed, then," May Margaret whispered, and if the darkness of the dug-out had not veiled her face Major Hilton would not have continued.

"Yes. It was a trench raid. The Boches took a section of our trenches. When we recovered it we found him. You'd better not tell his people, but I don't mind telling *you*. It was a pretty bad case."

"What do you mean?"

"One of those filthy Boche tricks. They'd nailed him up against the lining of the trench with bayonets. He was still alive when we found him. But they'll get it all back. We're going to give 'em hell to-night."

May Margaret was silent for so long that Major Hilton peered at her more closely. Her white face looked like a bruised thing in the darkness.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Perhaps I shouldn't have told you. They've done so much of that kind of thing, I suppose we've got used to it. Well, you've been tramping about all day, and if I were you, as you're going to spend the night here, I should settle down for a bit in the dug-out. The bombardment seems to be easing off a little, and you'll want to be awake all night. There'll be some sights coming on of the picturesque kind—fireworks and things, which is what you want, I suppose, for the blessed old public."

Far away, in another section of the trenches,

there was a burst of cheering. Major Hilton pricked up his ears to listen, but it was drowned immediately in another blast outside that sealed the mouth of the dug-out like a blow from a gigantic hammer and plunged them into complete darkness, thick with dust and sand.

"Are you all right?" said Hilton in a moment or two. "They've blown the parapet over us. Our chaps will soon get us out."

They sat down and waited. The sound of their rescuers' shovels was followed almost immediately by the pulling away of a sandbag, and the dusty daylight filtered in again, bringing with it another roar of cheering, nearer now, and rolling along the trenches like an Atlantic breaker.

"What the hell are they shouting about?" Hilton grunted as he scrambled through the opening. May Margaret was about to follow him, when the answer struck her motionless.

"America has declared war, sir."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir. They are passing the President's message along the line. It looks as if they mean business."

May Margaret had moved farther back into the darkness of the dug-out. She was breathing quickly, panting like a thirsty dog. She dropped

on her knees by an old packing-case in the corner.

"Thank God! Thank God!" she repeated with her eyes shut. Then the tears came, and her whole body shook.

A hand touched her shoulder. She rose to her feet and saw the bewildered face of Major Hilton peering again at her own.

"I'm sorry," she said. "It's the first time I've done it since I was a kid; but I've been hoping for this ever since the beginning. It's my country, you see."

"I've just been looking at the President's message," said Hilton. "I'm an Englishman, but—if a democracy can discipline itself—I'm not sure that yours won't be the greatest country in the world. I suppose it must be, or the Lord wouldn't have entrusted so much to you. He gave you the best that we ever had to give, and that was our Englishman, George Washington; and the best thing that George Washington ever did was to fight the German King and his twenty thousand Hessians. Eh, what?"

* * * * *

It was a little after dusk when the unexpected happened. There had been a lull in the bombardment, and, on Major Hilton's advice, May Margaret was resting in the dug-out in

readiness for the long wakeful night of the trenches.

She lay there, dazed as from shell-shock by the account of Brian's death, and the declaration of war from her own country had burst upon her with an equal violence, leaving her stunned in a kind of "No Man's Land," a desolate hell, somewhere between despair and triumph. Her world had broken up. Her mind was no longer her own. Her thoughts were helpless things between enormous conflicting forces, and, as if to escape from their rending clutches, as if to cling to the present reality, she whispered to herself the words of the wounded soldier at Charing Cross Station: "If you meet him, give him hell for *me!* Give him hell for *me!*" It seemed as if it were Brian himself speaking. Once, with a swift sense of horror, catching herself upon the verge of insanity, she found that her imagination was furtively beginning to picture his last agony, and she stopped it, screwing her face up like a child pulling faces at a nightmare and making inarticulate sounds to drive it away.

Of one thing she was quite certain now. She did not wish to live any longer in a world where these things were done. She meant, by hook or by crook, to get to the dangerous bit of the

trench, where our men were only separated by six yards from the enemy, and to stay there until she was killed. Even if she couldn't throw bombs herself, she supposed that she could hand them up to others. And any thought that conflicted with this idea she suppressed automatically with her monotonous echo of the wounded soldier : " Give him hell for *me!* "

But she was spared any further trouble about the execution of her plans, and she knew at once that she had come to the end of her quest when she heard the quick, sharp cries of warning outside.

It was a trench raid, brief and unimportant from a military point of view. The newspapers told London on the next day that nothing of importance had happened. Half a dozen revolvers cracked. There were curses and groans, a sound of soft thudding blows and grunting, gasping men, followed by a loud pig-like squeal. Then May Margaret saw three faces cautiously peering into the dug-out, faces of that strange brutality, heavy-boned, pig-eyed, evil-skulled, which has impressed itself upon the whole world as a distinct reversion from all civilised types of humanity. She knew them, as one recognises the smell of carrion, and her whole soul exulted as she seized her supreme chance of striking at

the evil thing. She had picked up a revolver almost unconsciously, and without pausing to think she fired three times with a steady hand. Two of them she knew that she had killed. The third had been too quick for her, and in another second she was down on her back with a blood-greased boot on her throat and a throng of evil-smelling cattle around her. Unhappily, they did not kill her at once, and so the discovery was made amidst a storm of guttural exclamations.

When the trench was retaken half an hour later a further discovery was made by Major Hilton. A locket containing a photograph of Brian Davidson was buried in what remained of her left breast, as if it had been trying to hide in her heart. It was almost the only thing about her that was unhurt.

Major Hilton made no explanation, but when the body was removed he gave strict orders for it to be buried by the side of Lieutenant Davidson.

* * * * *

A week later Mr. Harvey, of the *Chicago Bulletin*, was informed that his correspondent, Mr. Martin Grant, had died of pneumonia. The authorities left the responsibility of informing others who might be interested to his capable hands.

He went to see Julian Sinclair about it, but he could not discover whether that sincerely regretful young diplomat with the dazzling smile and the delightful manners knew anything more. It may have been a coincidence that, shortly afterwards, Mr. Harvey was recalled to the shores of Lake Michigan and replaced by another manager.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

VIII

THE LIGHTHOUSE

The position of a lighthouse-keeper in a sea infested by submarines is a peculiar one, but Peter Ramsay, keeper of the Hatchets Light, had reasons for feeling that his lonely tower, six miles from the mainland, was the happiest habitation in the world.

At five o'clock on a gusty October afternoon of the year 1916 Peter had just finished his tea and settled down with a pipe and the last number of the *British Weekly* for five minutes' reading before he turned to the secret of his happiness again. Precisely at this moment the commander of the U 99, three miles away to the north, after making sure through his periscope that there were no patrol boats in the vicinity, rose to the surface and began to look for the Hatchets. He, too, had reasons for wishing to get inside the lighthouse, if only for half an hour. It was only possible by trickery, but he thought it might be done under cover of darkness, and he was about to reconnoitre.

When he first emerged he had some difficulty in descrying his goal across that confused sea. His eye was guided by a patch of foam, larger than the ordinary run of white-caps, and glittering in the evening sun like a blackthorn blossom. As the sky brightened behind it he saw, rising upright, like the single slim pistil of those rough white petals, the faint shaft of the lighthouse itself.

He stole nearer till these pretty fancies were swallowed up in the savagery of the place. It greeted him with a deep muffled roar as of a hundred sea lions, and the air grew colder with its thin mists of spray. The blackthorns and white petals became an angry ship-wrecking ring of axe-headed rocks, furious with surf, and the delicate pistil assumed the stature of the Nelson Column.

It made his head reel to look up at its firm height from the tossing conning-tower as he circled the reef, making his observations. He noted the narrow door, twenty feet up, in the smooth wall of the shaft. There was no way of approaching it until the rope-ladder was let down from within. But, after midnight, when the custodian's wits might be a little drowsy, he thought his plan might succeed. He noted the pool on the reef, and the big boulder near the

base of the tower. There was only one thing which he did not see—an unimportant thing in war-time. He did not see the beauty of that unconscious monument to the struggling spirit of man.

Its lofty silence and endurance, in their stern contrast with the tumult below, had touched the imagination of many wanderers on that sea, for it soared to the same sky as their spires on land, and its beauty was heightened by the simplicity of its practical purpose. But it made no more impression on Captain Bernstein than it made on the sea-gulls that mewed and swooped round it.

When his observations were completed the U 99 sheered off and submerged. She had to lie "doggo" at the bottom of the sea for the next few hours, and there were several of her sisters waiting a mile or so to the north of a fine sandy bottom to compare notes. Two of these sisters were big submarine mine-layers of a new type. The U 99 settled down near them and began exchanging under-water messages at once.

"If you lay your mines properly and lie as near as possible to the harbour-mouth you can leave the rest to me. They will come out in a hurry, and you ought to sink two-thirds of them." This was the final message from Cap-

tain Bernstein, and shortly after eight o'clock all the other submarines moved off in the direction of the coast. The U 99 remained in her place till the hour was ripe.

About midnight she came to the surface again. Everything seemed propitious. There were no patrols in sight, and, in any case, Captain Bernstein knew that they seldom came within a mile of the lighthouse, for ships gave it a wide berth, and there was not likely to be good hunting in the neighbourhood. This was why the U-boats had found it so useful as a rendezvous lately.

It was a moonless night, and, as the U 99 stole towards the Hatchets for the second time, even Captain Bernstein was impressed by the spectacle before him. Against a sky of scudding cloud and flying stars the lighthouse rose like the sceptre of the oldest sea-god. The mighty granite shaft was gripped at the base by black knuckles of rock in a welter of foam. A hundred feet above, the six-foot reflectors of solid crystal sheathed the summit with fire, and flashed as they revolved there like the facets of a single burning jewel.

"They could be smashed with a three-inch gun," thought Bernstein, "and they are very costly. Many thousand pounds of damage

could thus be done, and perhaps many ships endangered." But he concluded, with some regret, that his other plans were more promising.

* * * * *

It was long past Peter's usual bed-time, but he was trimming his oil lamp just now in his tiny octagonal sitting-room half-way up the tower. He had been busy all the evening with the secret of his happiness, which was a very queer secret indeed. He was trying to write a book, trying and failing. His papers were scattered all over the worn red cloth that tried—and failed—to cover his oak table, exactly as poor Peter's language was trying to clothe his thought. Indeed, there were many clues to his life and character in that room, which served many purposes. It had only one window, hardly larger than the arrow-defying slits of a Norman castle. It was his kitchen, and a cooking-stove was fitted compactly into a corner. It was his library, and, facing the window, there was a book-shelf containing several tattered volumes by Mark Rutherford, a Bible, the "Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture," by Gladstone; the "First Principles" of Herbert Spencer, and the Essays of Emerson. There was also a small volume, bound in blue leather, called "The Wonders of the Deep." The leather binding was protected

by a brown-paper jacket, for it was a prize, awarded by the Westport Grammar School in 1864 to Peter Ramsay, aged fourteen, for his excellence in orthography. This, of course, was the beginning of all his dreams, and it was still their sustainment, though the death of his father, who had been the captain of a small coasting steamer, had thrown Peter on the world before he was fifteen, and ended his hopes of the scholarship which was to have carried him eventually to the heights.

The bound volumes were buttressed between piles of the *British Weekly*. The only picture on the wall was a framed oleograph of Gladstone, his chief of heroes, though Peter had long ago renounced the theology of the "Impregnable Rock." Whether the great statesman deserved this worship or not is a matter for historians. The business of this chronicle is to record the views of Peter, and these were quite clear.

He was restless to-night. It was his sixty-sixth birthday, and it reminded him that he was behindhand with his great work. Nobody else had reminded him of it, for he was quite alone in the world. He was beginning to wonder, almost for the first time, whether he was really destined to fail. He had begun to look his age

at last, but he was a fine figure of a man still. His white hair and flowing white beard framed a face of the richest mahogany brown, in which the blood mantled like wine over the cheek-bones. His deep eyes, of the marine blue that belongs only to the folk of the sea, were haunted sometimes by visionary fires, like those in the eyes of an imaginative child. He might have posed for the original fisherman of his name. Of course, he was regarded as a little eccentric by the dwellers on the coast whom he had often amazed by what they called his "innocence." The red-nosed landlord of the Blue Dolphin had often been heard on Sundays to say that "we should all do well if we were as innocent as Peter." When he visited the little town of Westport (which was now a naval base), the urchins in the street sometimes expressed their view of the matter by waiting until he was safely out of hearing, and then crowing like cocks.

Nobody knew of Peter Ramsay's secret, or the urchins might not have waited at all, and even the kindest of his friends would have regarded him as daft. But the comedy was not without its tragic aspect. Peter Ramsay may have been cracked, but it was with the peculiar kind of crack that you get in the everlasting hills, a rift that shows the sky. With his

imperfect equipment and hopeless lack of technique he was trying to write down certain truths, for the lack of which the civilised world at that moment was in danger of destruction.

This does not mean that Peter was the sole possessor of those truths. He was only one among millions of simple and unsophisticated souls, all over the world, who possessed these truths dumbly, and knew, with complete certainty, that their intellectual leaders for the most part lacked them or had lost them in a multitude of details. Those dumb millions were right about certain important matters, and their leaders, for all their dialectical cleverness, had lost sight of the truth which has always proceeded *ex ore infantum*. It was the tragedy of the twentieth century, and it had culminated in the tragedy of philosophical Germany. There were certain features of modern books, modern paintings, and modern music that mopped and mowed like faces through the bars of a mad-house, clamouring for dishonour and brutality in every department of life. These things could not be dissociated from the international tragedy. They were its heralds. Peter Ramsay was one of those obscure millions who were the most important figures in Armageddon because they,

and they alone, in our modern world, had retained the right to challenge the sophistries of Germany. They had not needed the war to teach them the reality of evil, and if they had sinned they had never for a moment tried to prove that they did right in sinning.

Peter knew all this, though he would not have said it in so many words. In his book he was trying to meet the main onset of all those destructive forces. He had realised that the modern world had no faith since the creeds had gone into the melting-pot, and he was trying to write down plainly for plain men exactly what he believed.

He turned over the red-lined pages of the big leather-bound ledger—half diary, half commonplace book—in which, for the last forty years, he had made his notes. It was a queer medley, beginning with passages written in his youth that recalled many of his old struggles. There was one in particular that always reminded him of a school friend named Herbert Potts, who had eventually won the coveted scholarship. They used to go for walks together over the hills and talk about science and religion.

"So you don't believe there is any future life," Peter had said to him one day.

"Not for the individual," replied Herbert Potts, adjusting his glasses, with a singularly intellectual expression.

"But if there is none for the individual, it means the end of all we are fighting for, because the race will come to an end eventually," said Peter. "Why, think, Potts, think; it means that all your progress drops over a precipice at last. It means that instead of the Figure of Love we must substitute the Figure of Death, stretching out his arms and saying to the whole human race, 'Come unto Me! Suffer little children to come unto Me!'"

"I am afraid all the evidence points that way," said Potts, and as he had just passed the London matriculation examination, the words rang like a death-knell in Peter's foolish heart. He remembered how the words had recurred to him in his dreams that night, and how he awoke in the grey dawn to find that his pillow was wet with tears.

There were many other memories in his book, memories of a long struggle, the wrestling with the angel, and at last the music of that loftier certainty which he longed to impart.

A little after midnight he threw aside the hopeless chaos of the manuscript, into which he had been trying to distil the essence of his scrap-

book. He rose and went upstairs to his bedroom on the next floor. It was a little smaller than his sitting-room, and contained a camp-bed, a washstand, with a cracked blue jug and basin, and a chest of drawers. Over the head of the bed was a photogravure reproduction of "The Light of the World," and on the wall facing it an illuminated prayer, "Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord!" Under this, affixed to the wall, was the telephone which connected the Hatchets with the Naval Station on the coast by an under-sea wire.

But in spite of this modern invention Peter Ramsay had quietly gone back through the centuries. He looked as if he were talking to a very great distance indeed, a distance so great that it became an immediate presence. (Do not mathematicians declare that if you could throw a stone into infinity it would return to your hand?) He was kneeling down by the bed, clasping his hands, lifting his face, closing his eyes, and moving his lips, exactly like a child at its prayers.

It is an odd fact, and doubtless it would have fortified the great ironic intellects of our day (though seventy feet in this fathomless universe may hardly be reckoned as depth) to

know that in the darkness of the reef outside, seventy feet below, four shadowy figures had just landed from a collapsible boat belonging to the U 99. Three of them were now hauling it out of the reach of the waves. The fourth was Captain Bernstein. He stood, fingering revolver, and looking up at the two lighted windows.

Concerning these things, Peter received no enlightenment; but he rose from his knees with a glowing countenance and hurried down to his work again.

"I'll begin at the beginning," he muttered.

He took a clean sheet of paper and headed it *Chapter I.* Under this he wrote the first four words of the Bible: "In the beginning God." Then he crossed them out, and wrote again, "First Principles," as a better means of approach to the moderns.

He consulted his ledger and decided that a certain paragraph, written long ago, must take the first place in his book. He wrote it down just as it stood.

"We have forgotten the first principles of straight thinking—the axioms. We have forgotten that the whole is greater than the part. Hence comes much fallacy among modern writers, even great ones, like that pessimist who

has said that man, the creature, possesses more nobility than that from which he came.

"One thing must be acknowledged as *known*, even by agnostics, namely, that if we have experienced here on earth the grandeurs of the soul of Beethoven and Shakespeare, there must be at the heart of things, before ever this earth was born, something infinitely greater. It is infinitely greater because it is the Producer—not the Product.

"There are some who say that this is only putting the mystery back a stage. This is not a true statement. The mystery is that there should be anything in existence at all. The moment you have a grain of sand in existence the impossible has happened, and the miracle of the things that we see around us can only be referred to some primal miracle, greater than all, because it contained all their possibilities within itself.

"Beyond this, we are all agnostics. But our reason, building on what we see around us, carries us thus far. Modern thinkers have reversed this process. They begin with man as the summit and explain him by something less. This, again, they explain by something less, and slowly whittle away all the visible universe till they arrive at the smallest possible residuum.

There is no more tragic spectacle in this age than that of the philosophers who, like Herbert Spencer, having reduced the whole universe to a nebula, try to bridge the gulf between this nebula and nothingness. The great intellect of Spencer grovels below the mental capacity of a child of ten as he makes this absurd attempt, announcing that perhaps the primal nebula might be conceived as thinning itself out until nothingness were reached. It is the agnostics who evade the issue. For there are certain things here and now which we must accept. We know that Love and Thought are greater than the dust to which we consign them. There is only one choice before us. Either there is nothing behind these things or else there is everything behind them. If we say that there is nothing behind them all our human struggle goes for nothing. We abandon even the axioms of our reason, and we are doubly traitors to the divine light that lives in every man. If we say that there is everything behind the universe, each of us has his own private door into that divine reality, the door of his own heart."

At this moment three of the shadowy figures on the reef below were ensconcing themselves behind a boulder of rock close to the base of the

tower, and the fourth figure was groping about on the reef, collecting a handful of stones.

"I have heard men say," Peter continued, "that they cannot believe in a God Who would permit all the suffering on this earth, or else He must be a limited God Who cannot help Himself.

"This is another question involving the matter of free will. How long would a world hold together if we could all depend on a miracle to help us at every turn, or even to save the innocent from the consequences of our guilt? Those who ask the question usually assume that our sufferings here are the end of all. The fact that the opposite assumption accords better with our sense of justice is surely no reason for denying it, especially when it follows from the answer given in the first paragraph. These men, asking for miraculous proof of omnipotence to save the world from suffering, are asking for nothing less than the abolition of law in the universe, and it is only in law that freedom can be found. The rising of the sun cannot be timed to suit each individual, but this is what modern thinkers demand. They say that an all-powerful God could do even this. When they have settled between themselves exactly what they wish, doubtless the Almighty

could answer their prayer. Till then, it is better to say, 'Thy law is a lantern unto my feet.'"

At this moment a stone came through the little window behind Peter. The glass scattered itself in splinters all over his red table-cloth. He leapt to his feet, blew the lamp out, and went to the window. He could see nothing in the darkness at first, but as he stood and listened he thought he heard a voice in the pauses of the wind crying for help.

Instantly he hurried out and down the winding stair to the narrow door. He shot back the great bolts and opened it. He stood there fifteen feet above the rocks, framed in the opening, his white hair and beard blowing about him, as he peered to right and left.

"Come down and help us, for God's sake!" the voice cried again.

And as Peter's eyes grew accustomed to the darkness he saw a dark figure crawling laboriously over the reef to the foot of the tower, where it fell as if in a faint. Peter's only thought was that a fishing boat had foundered. He dropped the rope-ladder at once and descended. He stooped over the fallen man. In the same flash of time he recognised that this was an enemy seaman, and three more shadowy

figures leapt from their hiding-place behind a boulder of rock and gripped him.

"There is no cause for fear," said their leader, rising to his feet. "Our boat has foundered, but we shall die of cold if we stay out here. You must take us into the lighthouse."

Peter regarded them curiously, saying nothing. The leader went up the ladder, and beckoned to the others who ordered Peter to go next, and then followed him.

"I regret that it was necessary to smash your window," said Captain Bernstein as the queer group gathered round the lamp in Peter's living-room. "But we might have died out there on a night like this before you could have heard us shouting. We shall not harm you although there are four of us. We are in danger ourselves. My friends and I are sick of this work, and if we are sure of good treatment we are prepared to help the British with all the information in our possession."

"How did you escape from the submarine?" said Peter.

"We were alone on deck," replied Bernstein, "and we took our chance of swimming for the Hatchets."

Peter surveyed the four drenched figures

thoughtfully. One of them was not realistic enough to satisfy him. There were several obviously dry patches about the shoulders.

"There's a pool on the reef," said Peter at last to this man. "Did you find it too cold?"

A change came over Bernstein's face at once.

"There's no time to be wasted," he said. "If you want to help your country go to your telephone and give this message to the naval base exactly as I tell it to you. You must say you have just sighted three submarines two hundred yards due north of the Hatchets light. You must say that you have sighted them yourself because they would not take our word for it, and you must not say anything about our being here at present. If you depart from these instructions you will be shot instantly. Now then, go to your telephone and speak."

Peter gathered up his beloved leather-bound book from the table and held it under his arm. It was his most precious possession, and the protective act was quite unconscious. Then, for the second time that night, he went into his bedroom, followed by the four Germans. He was white and shaking. He could not understand what these men were after, and the message they proposed seemed to be useful to his

own side. After all, the only kind of message that he could send would be something very like it. He might as well deliver it, since these crazy autocrats had decided that it must be given thus, and not otherwise.

He laid the precious book down on the bed, turned to the telephone, and lifted the receiver to his ear. As he did so the cold ring of a revolver pressed against his right temple. The first buzzings of the telephone resolved themselves into a voice from the coast of England asking what he wanted. Then it seemed as if a new light were thrown upon the character of the words he was about to speak. He knew instinctively that if he spoke them he would be working for the enemy.

In the same instant he saw exactly what he must do.

"This is Peter Ramsay speaking," he said, "from the Hatchets Light. I have just sighted four submarines due north of the Hatchets."

He paused. Then, with a rush, he said:

"Believe it is a trap. Germans in lighthouse forcing me to say this!"

The hand of one of the captors struck down the hook of the receiver. In the same instant, the shot rang out, and Peter Ramsay dropped

sidelong, a mere bundle of old clothes and white hair, dabbled with blood.

The German at the telephone replaced the receiver on the hook, which he was still holding down.

"Crazy old fool," muttered Bernstein. He was staring at the big red-lined scrap-book on the bed. It lay open at a page describing, in Peter's big scrawling hand, an open-air service among some Welsh miners which he had once witnessed, a memorial service on the day of Gladstone's funeral. He had been greatly impressed by their choral singing of what was supposed to be Gladstone's favourite hymn, and it ended with a quotation:

> "While I draw this fleeting breath,
> When my eyelids close in death,
> When I soar through tracts unknown,
> See Thee on Thy Judgment Throne,
> Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee!"

The murderer stooped and laid the revolver near the right hand of the dead man. One of his men touched him on the elbow as he did it, and pointed to Peter's own old-fashioned revolver on the little shelf beside the bed. Captain Bernstein nodded and smiled. The idea was a good one, and he put Peter's own revolver in his

stiffening fingers. He had just succeeded in making it look quite a realistic suicide when the telephone bell rang sharply, making him start upright as if a hand were laid upon his shoulder. He took the receiver again and listened.

"Can't hear," he said, trying to imitate Peter's gruff voice. "No—I dropped the telephone on the floor—no—it was a mistake—no—I said four submarines—two hundred yards north of the Hatchets Light—all right, sir."

He hung the receiver up again and looked at the others.

"We may succeed yet," he said. "Come quickly!"

A minute later they were standing on the lee of the reef. Bernstein blew a whistle thrice. It was answered from the darkness by another, shrill as the cry of a sea-gull, and in five minutes more the four men and the collapsible boat were aboard their submarine. It submerged at once, and went due south at twelve knots an hour below the unrevealing seas.

* * * * *

Commander Pickering, the officer on duty at the naval base, was not sure whether it was worth while paying any attention to the message

from the old man at the Hatchets. He went to the window and looked at the starry flash of the lighthouse in the distance.

"Old Peter probably sighted a school of porpoises. They frightened him into a fit," he said.

The two men of the Naval Reserve who were waiting for orders watched him like schoolboys expecting a holiday, but he could not make up his mind. He left the window and studied the big chart on the wall, where the movements of a dozen submarines were marked in red ink from point to point as the daily reports came in, till the final red star announced their destruction. He chewed his lip as he pondered. There was quite a fleet of submarine destroyers in Westport Harbour at this moment, but they had only just come in from a long spell, and he was loth to turn them out on a wild-goose chase.

"Confound the old idiot!" he muttered again. "He can't even talk straight. Wanted to say that he had seen submarines, and starts jabbering about Germans in the lighthouse. Ring him up again, Dawkins, and find out whether he is drunk or talking in his sleep."

Dawkins went to the telephone. For five minutes he alternately growled into the mouthpiece and moved the hook up and down.

"Don't get any answer at all, sir,"

"That's queer. He can't be asleep yet after that beautiful conversation."

Commander Pickering went to the window again with his night glasses.

"Damned if there isn't a light in both his rooms, and it's getting on for two o'clock in the morning. There's something rum happening. We'll take a sporting chance on it and make a regular sweep of the bay. I'll go out to the Hatchets myself on the *Silver King*. I think the old boy is dotty, and I suppose the Admiral will have my scalp for it to-morrow; but there's just one chance in a hundred thousand that Mr. Peter Ramsay did spot a squadron of U-boats. If so, we may as well strafe them properly."

He went to the telephone himself this time and began issuing orders all over the base. His final sentence was an after-thought, an echo and an elaboration of the queer warning he had received from the Hatchets.

"Don't go straight out. Make a sweep round by the south. There may be a trap, and you may as well let the dirigibles go ahead of you and do some scouting."

* * * * *

"It often happens with these chaps," said Commander Pickering to Dawkins as they stood in Peter's bedroom an hour before dawn. "It's the lonely life that does it. They ought always to have a couple of men in these places, and, if it hadn't been for the war, of course, there would have been two men at the Hatchets. Look here at all this stuff. The poor chap had religious mania or something. See what he has written on these scraps of paper, twenty or thirty times over, every blessed text he could find about lanterns and lights, and it's all mixed up with bits from Herbert Spencer on The Unknowable."

"It was well known all over Westport," said Dawkins, "that old Peter had a screw loose about religion, but he seemed such a reliable old boy. You don't think he could have seen anything to set him off like, sir? It seems funny that the door was left open like that."

"Lord knows what he may have been playing at before he did this. We'd better go upstairs and have a look at the light."

The two men plodded up the steep winding stair, poking into every corner on their way up, till they emerged on the little railed platform under the great crystal moons of the lantern. The glare blinded them.

"Turn those lights off," said Commander Pickering.

Dawkins ducked into the tower and obeyed.

Half a dozen patrol boats, each with its tiny black gun at bow and stern, were cruising to and fro over rough seas that looked from that height very much like the wrinkles on poor old Peter's grey face. Another sailor stepped on to the platform, breathing hard from the ascent, and saluted.

"A telephone message for you, sir," he said. "There's been a lot of mines discovered off the point. We should have run straight into them if we had neglected your warning and steered a straight course out."

Commander Pickering looked at Dawkins in silence. Far away to eastward the dawn was breaking, red as blood, through a low fringe of ragged grey clouds. In a few moments the crystal moons of the Hatchets Light were afire with it, and breaking it up into the colours of the rainbow round the black figures of the three men.

"We'll have to apologise to Peter," said Dawkins at last.

"It was a very lucky coincidence," said Commander Pickering as he led the way downstairs at a smart pace to Peter's room again.

"There's no doubt that he shot himself," he said. "Look at all this. The man was stark mad. See what he has written on the title page, under his own name: '*Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church.*'"

THE GARDEN ON THE CLIFF

IX

THE GARDEN ON THE CLIFF

"I DON'T know about three acres and a cow, but every man ought to have his garden. That's the way I look at it," said the old fisherman, picking up another yard of the brown net that lay across his knees. "There's gardens that you see, and gardens that you don't see. There's gardens all shut in with hedges, prickly hedges that will tear your hand if you try to make a spy-hole in them, and some that you wouldn't know was there at all—invisible gardens, like the ones that Cap'n Ellis used to talk about.

"I never followed him rightly, for I supposed he meant the garden of the heart, the same as the sentimental song; but he hadn't any use for that song, so he told me. My wife sent it to him for a Christmas present, thinking it would please him, and he used it for pipe-lights. The words was very pretty, I thought, and very appropriate to his feelings:

> 'Ef I should plant a little seed of love
> In the garden of your heart.'

That's how it went. But he didn't like it.

"Then there's other gardens that everyone can see, both market gardens and flower gardens. Cap'n Ellis told me he knew a man once that wore a cauliflower in his buttonhole whenever he went to chapel, and thought it was a rose. Leastways, he thought that everyone else thought it was a rose. Kind of an orstrich he must have been. But that wasn't the way with Cap'n Ellis. Everyone could see *his* garden, though he had a nice big hedge round three sides of it, and it wasn't more than three-quarters of an acre. Right on the edge of the white chalk coast it was, and his little six-room cottage looked like a piece of the white chalk itself.

"But he was a queer old chap, and he always would have it that nobody could really see his garden. I used to take him a few mackerel occasionally—he liked 'em for his supper—and he'd walk in his garden with me for half an hour at a time. Then, just as I'd be going, he'd give a little smile and say, 'Well, you haven't seen my garden yet! You must come again.'

"'Haven't seen your garden?' I'd say. 'I've been looking at it this half-hour an' more.'

"'Once upon a time there was a man that couldn't see a joke,' he'd say. Then he'd go off chuckling, and swinging his mackerel against the hollyhocks.

"Funny little old chap he was, with a pinched white face and a long nose and big grey eyes and fluffy white hair, for all the world like swansdown. But he'd be a good seaman in his day.

"He'd sit there, in his porch, with his spy-glass to his eye, looking out over his garden at the ships as they went up and down the Channel. Then he'd lower his glass a little to look at the butterflies, fluttering like little white sails over the clumps of thrift at the edge of the cliff and settling on the little pink flowers. Very pretty they was, too. He planted them there at the end of his garden, which ran straight down from his cottage to the edge of the cliff. He said his wife liked to see them nodding their pink heads against the blue sea, in the old days when she was waiting for him to come home from one of his voyages. 'Pink and blue,' he says, 'is a very pretty combination.' They matched her eyes and cheeks, too, as I've been told. But she's been dead now for twenty-five years or more.

"He had just one little winding path through the garden to the edge of the cliff; an' all the rest, at the right time of the year, was flowers. He'd planted a little copse of fir trees to the west of it, so as to shelter the flowers; and everyone

laughed at him for doing it. The sea encroaches a good many yards along this coast every year, and the cliffs were crumbling away with every tide. The neighbours told him that if he wanted a flower garden he'd better move inland.

" ' It was a quarter of a mile inland,' he says, ' when Polly and me first came to live here, and it hasn't touched my garden yet. It never will touch it,' he says, ' not while I'm alive. There are good breakwaters down below, and it will last me my time. Perhaps the trees won't grow to their full height, but I shan't be here to see,' he says ; ' and it's not the trees I'm thinking about. It's the garden. They don't have to be very tall to shelter my garden. As for the sea,' he says, ' it's my window, my *bay*-window, and I hope you see the joke. If I was inland, with four hedges around my garden instead of three,' he says, ' it would be like living in a house without a window. Three hedges and a big blue bay-window, that's the garden for me,' he says.

" And so he planted it full of every kind of flowers that he could grow. He had sweet-williams, and larkspurs, and old man's beard, and lavender, and gillyflowers, and a lot of them old-fashioned sweet-smelling flowers, with names that he used to say were like church bells at even-

ing, in the old villages, out of reach of the railway lines.

"And they all had a meaning to him which others didn't know. You might walk with him for a whole summer's afternoon in his garden, but it seemed as if his flowers kept the sweetest part of their scents for old Cap'n Ellis. He'd pick one of them aromatic leaves and roll it in his fingers, and put it to his nose and say, 'Ah,' like as if he was talking to his dead sweetheart.

"'It's a strange thing,' he'd say, 'but when she was alive I was away at sea for fully three parts of the year. We always talked of the time when I'd retire from the sea. We thought we'd settle down together in our garden and watch the ships. But when that time came it was her turn to go away, and it's my turn to wait. But there's a garden where we meet,' he'd say, 'and that's the garden you've never seen.'

"There was one little patch, on the warmest and most sheltered side, that he called his wife's garden; and it was this that I thought he meant. It was just about as big as her grave, and he had little clusters of her favourite flowers there—rosemary and pansies and Canterbury bells; and her name, Ruth, done very neat and pretty in Sussex violets. It came up every year in April, like as if the garden was remembering.

"Parson considered that Cap'n Ellis was a very interesting man.

"'He's quite a philosopher,' he said to me one day; and I suppose that was why the old chap talked so queer at times.

"One morning, after the war broke out, I'd taken some mackerel up to Cap'n Ellis.

"'Are you quite sure they're fresh?' he said, the same as he always did, though they were always a free gift to him. But he meant no offence.

"'Fresh as your own lavender,' I says, and then we laughs as usual, and sat down to look at the ships, wondering whether they were transports or Red Cross or men-of-war, as they lay along the horizon. Sometimes we'd see an airplane. They used to buzz up and down that coast all day; and Cap'n Ellis would begin comparing it through his glass with the dragon-flies that flickered over his gillyflowers. There was a south-west wind blowing in from the sea over his garden, and it brought us big puffs of scent from the flowers.

"'Hour after hour,' he says, 'day after day, sometimes for weeks I've known the south-west wind to blow like that. It's the wind that wrecked the Armada,' he says, 'and, though it comes gently to my garden, you'd think it would

blow all the scents out of the flowers in a few minutes. But it don't,' he says. 'The more the wind blows, the more sweetness they give out,' he says. 'Have you ever considered,' he says, 'how one little clump of wild thyme will go on pouring its heart out on the wind? Where does it all come from?'

"I was always a bit awkward when questions like that were put to me; so—just to turn him off like—I says, 'Consider the lilies of the field.'

"'Ah,' he says, turning to me with his eyes shining, 'that's the way to look at it.' I heard him murmuring another text under his breath: 'Come, thou south, and blow upon my garden.' And he shook hands with me when I said good-bye, as if I'd shown him my feelings, which made me feel I wasn't treating him right, for I'd only said the first thing that came into my mind, owing to my awkwardness at such times.

"Well, it was always disturbing me to think what might happen to Cap'n Ellis if one day he should find his garden slipping away to the beach. It overhung quite a little already, and there had been one or two big falls of chalk a few hundred yards away. Some said that the guns at sea were shaking down the loose boulders.

"Of course, he was an old man now, three score years and ten at least; and my own belief

was that if his garden went he would go with it. The Parish Council was very anxious to save a long strip of the cliff adjoining his garden, because it was their property; and they'd been building a stone wall along the beach below to protect it from the high tide. But they were going to stop short of Cap'n Ellis's property, because of the expense, and he couldn't afford to do it himself. A few of us got together in the Plough, and tried to work out a plan of carrying on the wall, by mistake, about fifteen feet farther, which was all it needed. We'd got the foreman on our side, and it looked as if we should get it done at the Council's expense after all, which was hardly honest, no doubt, in a manner of speaking, though Cap'n Ellis knew nothing about it.

"But the end came in a way that no wall could have prevented, though it proved we were right about the old man having set his heart in that garden. David Copper, the shepherd, saw the whole thing. It happened about seven o'clock of a fine summer morning, when the downs were all laid out in little square patches, here a patch of red clover, and there a patch of yellow mustard, like a crazy quilt, only made of flowers, and smelling like Eden garden itself for the dew upon them.

" It was all still and blue in the sky, and the larks going up around the dew-ponds and bursting their pretty little hearts for joy that they were alive, when, just as if the shadow of a hawk had touched them, they all wheeled off and dropped silent.

" Pretty soon there was a whirring along the coast, and one of them airplanes came up, shining like silver in the morning sun. Copper didn't pay much attention to it at first, for it looked just as peaceable as any of our own, which he thought it was. Then he sees a flash in the middle of Cap'n Ellis's garden, and the overhung piece, where the little clumps of thrift were, goes rumbling down to the beach like as if a big bag of flour had been emptied over the side. The airplane circled overhead, and Copper thinks it was trying to hit the coastguard station, which was only a few score yards away, though there was nobody there that morning but the coastguard's wife and the old black figurehead in front of it, and there never was any guns there at any time.

" The next thing Copper saw was Cap'n Ellis running out into what was left of his garden, with his nightshirt flapping around him, for all the world like a little white sea swallow. He runs down with his arms out as if he was trying

to catch hold of his garden an' save it. Copper says he never knew whether the old man would have gone over the edge of the cliff or not. He thinks he would, for he was running wildly. But before he reached the edge there was another flash, and when the smoke had cleared there was no garden or cottage or Cap'n Ellis at all, but just another big bite taken out of the white chalk coast.

"We found him under about fifteen tons of it down on the beach. The curious thing was that he was all swathed and shrouded from head to foot in the flowers of his garden. They'd been twisted all around him, lavender and gilly-flowers and hollyhocks, so that you'd think they were trying to shield him from harm. P'raps they've all gone with him to one of them invisible gardens he used to talk about, where he was going to meet his dead sweetheart.

"They buried him on the sunny side of the churchyard. You can see a bit of blue sea between the yew trees from where he lies, so he's got his window still, and there's a very appropriate inscription on his tombstone:

"'*Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south: blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow forth.*'"

THE HAND OF THE MASTER

X

THE HAND OF THE MASTER

It was on Christmas Day, 1914, that I received one of the strangest documents that I have ever read. It was in the form of a letter from Jonathan Martin, who had made himself a torch of ambition and fear to many moths in London by painting portraits that were certain to be the pictures of the year, but also certain to reveal all the idiosyncrasies, good or bad, of their subjects. It was the fashion to call him cynical. In fact, he was an artist, and a great one.

His unusual power of eliciting unexpected meanings from apparently meaningless incidents and objects was not confined to his art. In private conversation he would often startle you with a sentence that was like the striking of a match in a dark room. You didn't know that the room was dark till he spoke, and then, in a flash, mysterious relationships at which you had never guessed, were established. You caught a glimpse of an order and a meaning that you

had not discerned before. The aimless thing over which you had barked your shin became a coal-scuttle, the serried row of dark objects that irritated your left elbow became the works of Shakespeare, and, if you were lucky, you perhaps discovered the button by which you could switch on the electric light, and then sit down by the hearth and read of "beauty making beautiful old rhyme."

But this is a very faint hint of the kind of illumination with which he would surprise you on all kinds of occasions. I shall never forget the way in which he brought into a queer juxtaposition "The Day" that Germany had been toasting for forty years, and the final request for an answer before midnight, which was embodied in the British ultimatum. He would give you a patch of unexpected order in the chaos of politics, and another in the chaos of the creeds—patches that made you feel a maddening desire to widen them until they embraced the whole world. You felt sure that he himself had done this, that he lived in a reintegrated universe, and that—if only there were time enough—he could give you the whole scheme. In short, he saw the whole universe as a work of art, and he conceived it to be his business, in his own art, to take this or that apparently isolated subject

and show you just the note it was meant to strike in the harmony of the whole. He was very fond of quoting the great lines of Dante, where he describes the function of the poet as that of one who goes through the world and where he sees the work of Love, records it. But, please to remember, this did not imply that the subject was necessarily a pleasant one. Beauty was always there, but the beauty was one of relationships, not of the thing itself. As he once said, "An old boot in the gutter will serve as a subject if you can make it significant, if you can set it in relation to the enduring things." It is necessary to make this tedious preface to his odd letter, or the point of it may be lost.

"I want to tell you about the most haunting and dramatic episode I have encountered during these years of war," he wrote. "It was a thing so slight that I hardly know how to put it into words. It couldn't be painted, because it includes two separate scenes, and also—in paint—it would be impossible to avoid the merely sentimental effect.

"It happened in London during the very early stages of the struggle. One afternoon I was riding down Regent Street on the top of a 'bus. The pavements were crowded with the usual throng. Women in furs were peering into

the windows of the shops. Newspaper boys were bawling the latest lies. Once I thought I saw a great scribble of the Hand that writes history where a theatre poster, displaying a serpentine woman, a kind of Aubrey Beardsley vampire, was half obliterated by a strong diagonal bar of red, bearing the words, '*Kitchener wants a hundred thousand men.*' My mind was running on symbols that afternoon, and I wondered if it did perhaps mean the regeneration of art and life in England at last.

" Then we overtook a strange figure, a blind man, tapping the edge of the pavement with a rough stick, cut out of some country hedgerow. He was carrying in his left hand a four-foot pole, at the top of which there was nailed a board, banner-wise, about three feet long and two feet wide. On the back of the board, as we overtook him, I read the French text in big blood-red letters: '*Venez à moi, vous tous qui êtes travaillés et chargés, et je vous soulagerai.*'

" On the other side of the board, as we halted by the curb a little in front of him, there was the English version of the same text, in big black letters: '*Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*'

" The blind man was tall and lean-faced and held himself very upright. He was poorly

dressed, but very clean and neat. The tap of his stick was like the smart tap of a drum, and he marched more rapidly than any of those who were going in the same direction.

"There were several things about him that puzzled me. There was no advertisement of any sect or any religious meeting, nothing but the two texts on his placard. He went past us like a soldier, and he carried it like the flag of his regiment. He did not look as if he were asking for alms. The pride on his face forbade the suggestion, and he never slackened his quick pace for a moment. He seemed entirely unrelated to the world around him.

"Possibly, I thought, he was one of those pathetic beings whose emotions had been so stirred by the international tragedy that, despite their physical helplessness, they were forced to find some outlet. Perhaps he was an old soldier, blinded in some earlier war. Perhaps he was merely a religious fanatic. In any case, in the great web of the world's events he seemed to be a loose fantastic thread, and, although he was carrying a more important message than anyone else, nobody paid any attention to him.

"In a few moments the 'bus had carried my thoughts and myself into other regions, and, for the time, I forgot him. I occupied myself, as I

often do, in composing a bit of doggerel to the rhythm of the wheels. Here it is. It is pretty bad, but the occasion may make it interesting:

"Once, as in London 'buses
At dusk I used to ride,
The faces Hogarth painted
Would rock from side to side,
All gross and sallow and greasy,
And dull and leaden-eyed.

"They nodded there before me
In such fantastic shape,
The donkey and the gosling,
The sheep, the whiskered ape,
With so much empty chatter,
So many and foolish lies,
I lost the stars of heaven
Through looking in their eyes.

"Late in the afternoon I was returning westward along the Strand. I remember walking slowly to look at the beauty of the sunset sky, against which the Nelson Column, in those first days of the fight, rose with a more spiritual significance than ever before. The little Admiral stood like a watchman looking out to sea from the mainmast of our Ship of State against that dying glory. It was the symbol of the national soul, high and steadfast over the great dark lions, round which so many quarrelling voices had risen, so many quarrelling faces had surged and drifted away like foam in the

past. This was the monument of the enduring spirit, a thing to still the heart and fill the eyes of all who speak our tongue to-day.

"I was so absorbed in it that I did not notice the thick crowd choking the entrances to Charing Cross Station until I was halted by it. But this was a very different crowd from those of peace-time. They were all very silent, and I did not understand what swarming instinct had drawn them together. Nor did they understand it themselves—yet! 'I think they are expecting something,' was the only reply I got to my inquiry.

"I made my way round to the front of the station, but the big iron gates were closed and guarded by police. Nobody was allowed to enter the station. Little groups of railway porters were clustered here and there, talking in low voices. I asked one of these men what was happening.

"'They're expecting something, some train. But we don't know what it is bringing.'

"As he spoke there was a movement in the crowd. A compact body of about forty ambulance men marched through into the open space before the station. Many of them were carrying stretchers. They looked grave and anxious. Some of their faces were tense and white as if they too were expecting something, something

they almost dreaded to see. This was very early in the war, remember, before we knew what to expect from these trains.

"The gates of the station swung open. The ambulance men marched in. A stream of motor ambulances followed. Then the gates were closed again.

"I waited with the waiting crowd for half an hour. It was impossible now to make one's way through the dense crush. From where I stood, jammed back against the iron railings in front of the station, I could see that all the traffic in the Strand was blocked. The 'buses were halted, and the passengers were standing on the top like spectators in some enormous crowded theatre. The police had more and more difficulty in keeping the open space before the station. At last the gates were swung apart again, and the strangest procession that London had ever seen began to come out.

"First, there were the sitting-up cases—four soldiers to a taxicab, many of them still bandaged about the brows with the first blood-stained field dressings. Most of them sat like princes, and many of them were smiling, but all had a new look in their faces. Officers went by, grey-faced, and the measure of their seriousness seemed to be the measure of their intelligence

rather than that of their wounds. Without the utterance of a word the London crowd began to feel that here was a new thing. The army of Britain was making its great fighting retreat before some gigantic force that had brought this new look into the faces of the soldiers. It was our first real news from the front. From the silent faces of these men who had met the first onset with their bodies we got our first authentic account of the new guns and the new shells and the new hell that had been loosed over Europe.

"But the crowd had not yet fully realised it. A lad in khaki came capering out of the station, waving his hands to the throng and shouting something that sounded like a music-hall jest. The crowd rose to what it thought was the old familiar occasion.

"'Hello, Tommy! Good boy, Tommy! Shake hands, Tommy! Are we downhearted, Tommy?' The old vacuous roar began, and, though all the faces near me seemed to have two eyes in them, everyone began to look cheerful again.

"The capering soldier stopped and looked at them. Then he made a grotesque face, and thrust his tongue out. He looked more like a gargoyle than a man.

"The shouts of 'Tommy, Tommy,' still continued, though a few of the shouters were evidently puzzled. Then a brother soldier, with his left arm in a sling, took the arm of the comedian, and looked a little contemptuously at the crowd.

"'Shell-shock,' he said quietly. And the crowd shouted no more that day. It was not a pleasant mistake, and it was followed by a procession of closed ambulances containing the worst cases.

"Then came something newer even than wounded men, a motley stream of civilians, the Belgian refugees. They came out of the station like a flock of sheep, and the fear of the wolf was still in their eyes. The London crowd was confronted with this other crowd, so like itself, a crowd of men in bowler hats and black coats, of women with children clinging to their skirts, and it was one of the most dramatic meetings in history. The refugees were carrying their household goods with them, as much as could be tied in a bundle or shut in a handbag. Some of the women were weeping. One of them—I heard afterwards—had started with four children, but had been separated from the youngest in the confusion of their flight. It was doubtful whether they would ever be re-united.

"Now, as this new crowd streamed out of the gates of the station towards the vehicles that had been prepared for them, some of their faces lifted a little, and a light came into them that was more than the last radiance of the sunset. They looked as if they had seen a friend. It was a look of recognition, and though it was only a momentary gleam, it had a beauty so real and vivid that I turned my head to see what had caused it.

"And there, over the sea of faces that reached now to the foot of the Nelson Column, I saw something that went through me like great music. Facing the gates of the station and lifting out of the midst of the crowd like the banner of a mighty host, nay, like the banner of all humanity, there was a placard on a pole. The sunset light caught it and made it blaze like a star. It bore, in blood-red letters, the solemn inscription that I had seen in the earlier part of the day: '*Venez à moi, vous tous qui êtes travaillés et chargés, et je vous soulagerai.*'

"My blind man had found his niche in the universe. It was hardly possible that he was even conscious of what he was doing. It was hardly possible that he knew which side of the banner was turned towards the refugees, whether it was the English, that would mean nothing to

them, or the French that would speak to them like a benediction. He had been swung to his place and held in it by external forces, held there, as I myself was jammed against the iron railings. But he had become, in one moment, the spokesman of mankind, and if he had done nothing else in all his life, it had been worth living for that one unconscious moment.

"You may be interested to hear the conclusion of the doggerel which came into my head as I went home:

"Now, as I ride through London,
The long wet vistas shine
Beneath the wheeling searchlights
As they were washed with wine,
And every darkened window
Is holy as a shrine.

"The deep-eyed men and women
Are fair beyond belief,
Ennobled by compassion,
And exquisite with grief.
Along the streets of sorrow
A river of beauty rolls.
The faces in the darkness
Are like immortal souls."

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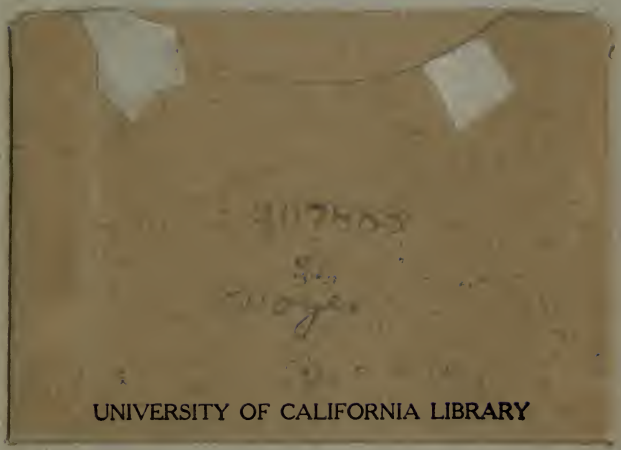
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